This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

SA3805.698.15

THE MAYAS,

THE SOURCES OF THEIR HISTORY.

DR. LE PLONGEON IN YUCATAN,

HIS ACCOUNT OF DISCOVERIES.

BY

STEPHEN SALISBURY, JR.

GOLFO DE M

PLANO DE YUCATAN

1848

VISTA de la CATEDRAL de MERIDA

BAHIA DE CAMPECHE

CAMPECHE

Champoton

Sabancuy

Sabancuchen

Chuchul

Laguna de Terminos

S. Miguel

TABASCO

S. JUAN BAUTISTA

Palenque

Tenosique

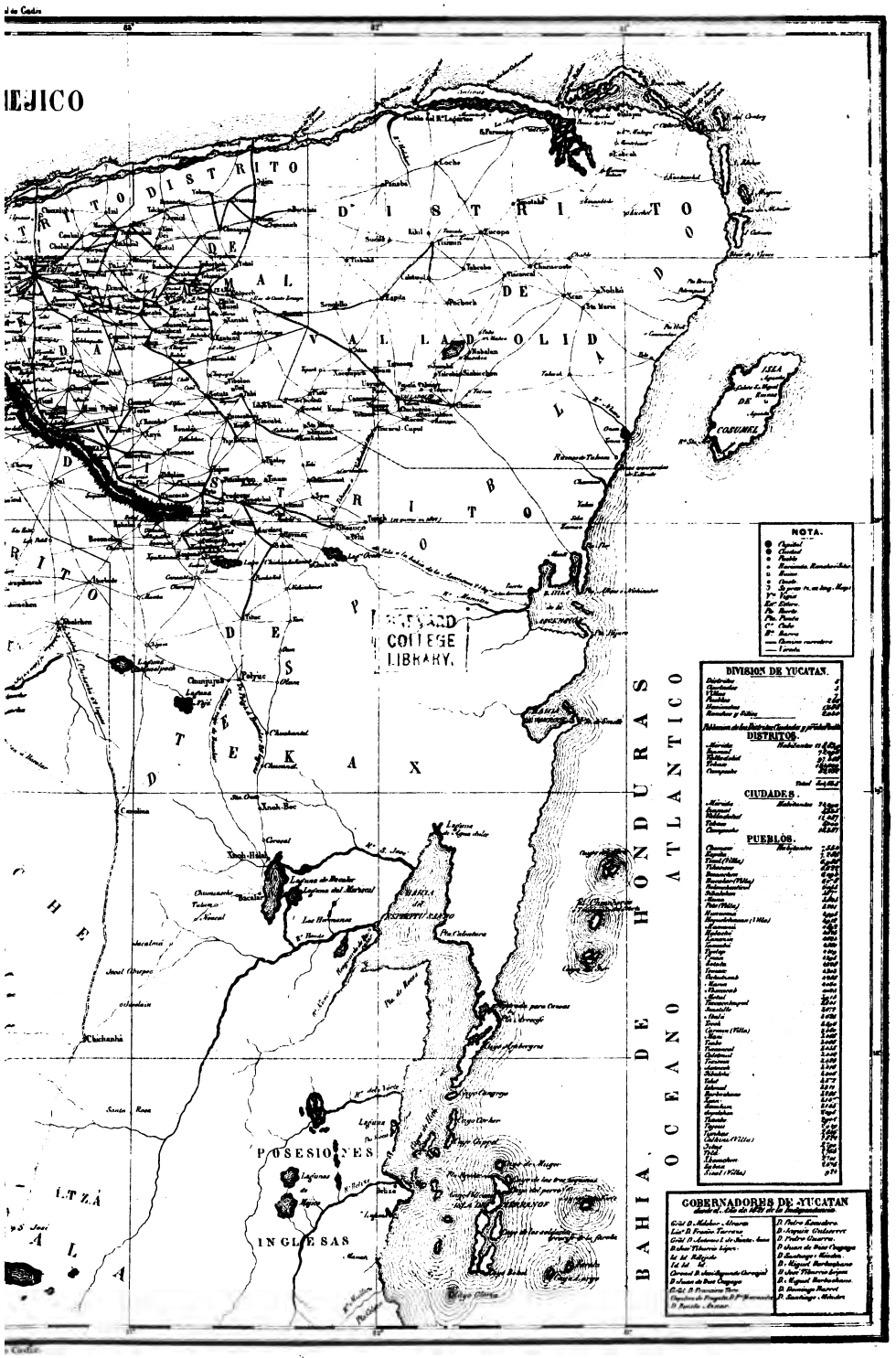
CHIAPAS

TERRITORIO DE PETEN

Tumbala

Longitud Oeste

THE HELIOTYPE PRINTING CO. 220 DEVONSHIRE ST BOSTON


MEJICO
DISTRITO DE VALLADOLID
DISTRITO DE TABASCO
DISTRITO DE TEKAX
ISLA DE COSUMEL
BAHIA DE HONDURAS
OCEANO ATLANTICO
POSESIONES INGLESAS
NOTA.
DIVISION DE YUCATAN.
DISTRITOS.
CIUDADES.
PUEBLOS.
GOBERNADORES DE YUCATAN
HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY.

THE MAYAS,

THE SOURCES OF THEIR HISTORY.

DR. LE PLONGEON IN YUCATAN,

HIS ACCOUNT OF DISCOVERIES.

LIBRARY

BY STEPHEN SALISBURY, JR.

FROM PROCEEDINGS OF THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY, OF APRIL 26, 1876, AND APRIL 25, 1877.

PRIVATELY PRINTED.

WORCESTER:
PRESS OF CHARLES HAMILTON.
1877.

SA 3805.698.15
Harvard College Library
1878 Jan. 28.

WITH THE RESPECTS OF THE WRITER.

2.352.24 (H.U. 1856.)

CONTENTS.

THE MAYAS AND THE SOURCES OF THEIR HISTORY, ... *Page* 3
DR. LE PLONGEON IN YUCATAN, ... " 53

ILLUSTRATIONS.

MAP OF YUCATAN, ... FRONTISPIECE.
LOCALITY OF DISCOVERIES AT CHICHEN-ITZA, ... *Page* 58
STATUE EXHUMED AT CHICHEN-ITZA, ... " 62
RELICS FOUND WITH THE STATUE, ... " 74

THE MAYAS

AND THE SOURCES OF THEIR HISTORY.

[Proceedings of American Antiquarian Society, April 26, 1876.]

THE most comprehensive and accurate map of Yucatan is that which has been copied for this pamphlet. In the several volumes of travel, descriptive of Maya ruins, are to be found plans more or less complete, intended to illustrate special journeys, but they are only partial in their treatment of this interesting country. The *Plano de Yucatan*, herewith presented—the work of Sr. Dn. Santiago Nigra de San Martin—was published in 1848, and has now become extremely rare. It is valuable to the student, for it designates localities abounding in ruins—those not yet critically explored, as well as those which have been more thoroughly investigated—by a peculiar mark, thus ▭, and it also shows roads and paths used in transportation and communication. Since its publication political changes have caused the division of the Peninsula into the States of Yucatan and Campeachy, which change of boundaries has called for the preparation of a new and improved map. Such an one is now being engraved at Paris and will soon be issued in this country. It is the joint production of Sr. Dn. Joaquin Hubbe and Sr. Dn. Andres Aznar Pérez, revised by Dr. C. Hermann Berendt.

The early history of the central portions of the western

hemisphere has particularly attracted the attention of European archæologists, and those of France have already formed learned societies engaged specifically in scientific and antiquarian investigations in Spanish America. It is to the French that credit for the initiative in this most interesting field of inquiry is especially due, presenting an example which can not fail to be productive of good results in animating the enthusiasm of all engaged in similar studies.

The Société Américaine de France (an association, like our own, having the study of American Antiquities as a principal object, and likely to become prominent in this field of inquiry), has already been briefly mentioned by our Librarian; but the reception of the *Annuaire* for 1873, and a statement of the present condition of the Society in the *Journal des Orientalistes* of February 5, 1876, gives occasion for a more extended notice. The Society was founded in 1857; and among those most active in its creation were M. Brasseur de Bourbourg, M. Léon de Rosny, and M. Alfred Maury. The objects of the association, as officially set forth, were, first, the publication of the works and collections of M. Aubin, the learned founder of a theory of American Archæology, which it was hoped would throw much light upon the hieroglyphical history of Mexico before the conquest;* second, the publication of grammars and dictionaries of the native languages of America; third, the foundation of

---

* M. L'Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg, in his *Histoire des nations civilisées du Mexique* (Paris, 1859, vol. I. Preface), speaks of M. Aubin as the translator of the manuscript "*Historia Tulteca*," as the author of the *Mémoire sur l'écriture figurative et la peinture didactique des anciens Mexicains*, in which he reconstructed the system of Mexican figurative writing almost entirely, and as the present owner of what remains of the celebrated Boturini collection, and of many other historical treasures, gathered in his various travels.

professorships of History, Archæology, and American Languages; and fourth, the creation, outside of Paris, of four Museums like the Museum of Saint Germain, under the auspices of such municipalities as encourage their foundation, as follows:

A.—Musée mexicaine.
B.—Musée péruvienne et de l'Amérique du Sud.
C.—Musée ethnographique de l'Amérique du Nord.
D.—Musée des Antilles.

The list of members contains the names of distinguished archæologists in Europe, and a foreign membership already numerous; and it is contemplated to add to this list persons interested in kindred studies from all parts of the civilized world. The publications of the Society, and those made under its auspices, comprehend, among others, *Essai sur le déchiffrement de l'Ecriture hiératique de l'Amérique Centrale*, by M. Léon de Rosny, President of the Society, 1 vol, in folio, with numerous plates. This work treats critically the much controverted question of the signification of Maya characters, and furnishes a key for their interpretation.* Also, *Chronologie hiéroglyphico phonétique des Rois Aztéques de* 1352 *à* 1522, *retrouvée dans diverses mappes américaines antiques, expliquée et précédée d'une introduction sur l'Écriture mexicaine*, by M. Edouard Madier de Montjau. The archæology of the two Americas,

*"In the Congress of Americanists held last July at Nancy, France, M. Léon de Rosny delivered a masterly address on the Maya hieroglyphics. He critically analyzed the attempts at decypherment by Brasseur de Bourbourg and H. de Charency. The Bishop de Landa first discovered a clue to their meaning. He made out seventy-one signs, which number Rosny has increased to one hundred and thirty-two. Rosny has also determined the order in which they should be read, as a rule from left to right, but in exceptional cases from right to left." —[The Popular Science Monthly, New York, May, 1876, pp. 118-119.]

and the ethnography of their native tribes, their languages, manuscripts, ruins, tombs and monuments, fall within the scope of the Society, which it is their aim to make the school and common centre of all students of American pre-Columbian history. M. Émile Burnouf, an eminent archæologist, is the Secretary. The *Archives* for 1875 contain an article on the philology of the Mexican languages, by M. Aubin; an account of a recent voyage to the regions the least known of Mexico and Arizona, by M. Ch. Schoebel; the last written communication of M. de Waldeck, the senior among travellers; an article by M. Brasseur de Bourbourg, upon the language of the Wabi of Tehuantepec; and an essay by M. de Montjau, entitled *Sur quelques manuscripts figuratifs mexicains*, in which the translation of one of these manuscripts, by M. Ramirez of Mexico, is examined critically, and a different version is offered. The author arrives at the startling conclusion, that we have thus far taken for veritable Mexican manuscripts, many which were written by the Spaniards, or by their order, and which do not express the sentiments of the Indians. Members of this Society, also, took an active part in the deliberations of the *Congrès international des Américanistes*, which was held at Nancy in 1875.

It was a maxim of the late Emperor Napoléon III., that France could go to war for an idea. The Spanish as discoverers were actuated by the love of gold, and the desire of extending the knowledge and influence of christianity, prominently by promoting the temporal and spiritual power of the mother church. In their minds the cross and the flag of Spain were inseparably connected. The French, however, claim to be ready to explore, investigate and study, for

science and the discovery of truth alone. In addition to the *Commission Scientifique du Mexique* of 1862, which was undertaken under the auspices of the French government, and which failed to accomplish all that was hoped, the Emperor Maximilian I. of Mexico projected a scientific exploration of the ruins of Yucatan during his brief reign, while he was sustained by the assistance of the French. The tragic death of this monarch prevented the execution of his plans; but his character, and his efforts for the improvement of Mexico, earned for this accomplished but unfortunate prince the gratitude and respect of students of antiquity, and even of Mexicans who were politically opposed to him.*

The attention of scholars and students of American Antiquities is particularly turned to Central America, because in that country ruins of a former civilization, and phonetic and figurative inscriptions, still exist and await an interpretation. In Central America are to be found a great variety of ruins of a higher order of architecture than any existing in America north of the Equator. Humboldt speaks of these remains in the following language: "The architectural remains found in the peninsula of Yucatan testify more than those of Palenque to an astonishing degree of civilization. They are situated between Valladolid Mérida and Campeachy." † Prescott says of this region. "If the remains on the Mexican soil are so scanty, they multiply as we descend the southeastern slope of the Cordilleras, traverse the rich valleys of Oaxaca, and pene-

---

* *Geographia de las lenguas y carta ethnografica de Mexico.* By M. Orosco y Berra, Mexico, 1864. Introduction p. X. *La Situation actual de la Raza indigena de México.* By Don Francisco Pimentel, Mexico, 1864, Dedication.

† Views of Nature, page 131.

trate the forests of Chiapas and Yucatan. In the midst of these lonely regions, we meet with the ruins recently discovered of several eastern cities — Mitla, Palenque, and Itzalana or Uxmal, — which argue a higher civilization than anything yet found on the American Continent."*

The earliest account in detail — as far as we know — of Mayan ruins, situated in the States of Chiapas and Yucatan, is presented in the narrative of Captain Antonio del Rio, in 1787, entitled *Description of an ancient city near Palenque.* His investigation was undertaken by order of the authorities of Guatemala, and the publication in Europe of its results was made in 1822. In the course of his account he says, "a Franciscan, Thomas de Soza, of Mérida, happening to be at Palenque, June 21, 1787, states that twenty leagues from the city of Mérida, southward, between Muna, Ticul and Noxcacab, are the remains of some stone edifices. One of them, very large, has withstood the ravages of time, and still exists in good preservation. The natives give it the name of Oxmutal. It stands on an eminence twenty yards in height, and measures two hundred yards on each façade. The apartments, the exterior corridor, the pillars with figures in medio relievo, decorated with serpents and lizards, and formed with stucco, besides which are statues of men with palms in their hands, in the act of beating drums and dancing, resemble in every respect those observable at Palenque."† After speaking of the existence of many other ruins in Yucatan, he says he does not consider a description necessary, because the identity of the ancient inhabitants of Yucatan and Palenque is proved, in his

* Conquest of Mexico, New York, 1843, vol. III., page 404.

† Description of an ancient city near Palenque, page 6.

opinion, by the strange resemblance of their customs, buildings, and acquaintance with the arts, whereof such vestiges are discernible in those monuments which the current of time has not yet swept away.

The ruins of Yucatan, those of the state of Chiapas and of the Island of Cozumel, are very splendid remains, and they are all of them situated in a region where the Maya language is still spoken, substantially as at the time of the Spanish discovery.*

Don Manuel Orosco y Berra, says of the Indian inhabitants, "their revengeful and tenacious character makes of the Mayas an exceptional people. In the other parts of Mexico the conquerors have imposed their language upon the conquered, and obliged them gradually to forget their native language. In Yucatan, on the contrary, they have preserved their language with such tenacity, that they have succeeded to a certain point in making their conquerors accept it. Pretending to be ignorant of the Spanish, although they comprehend it, they never speak but in the Maya language, obeying only orders made in that language, so that it is really the dominant language of the peninsula, with the only exception of a part of the district of Campeachy."†

In Cogolludo's Historia de Yucatan, the similarity of ruins throughout this territory is thus alluded to: "The incontesta-

---

* *Quadro descriptivo y comparativo de las lenguas indígenas de México*, by Francisco Pimentel, Mexico, 1865, p. 3. "The Maya is also still the spoken language of the Island of Carmen, the town of Monte Christo in Tobasco, and Palenque in Chiapas. With so much tenacity have the Indians preserved this language that to-day they speak no other, so that the whites find themselves obliged to learn it in order to make themselves understood."

† *Geographia de las Lenguas, y Carta ethnographica de México*, by Manuel Orosco y Berra, México, 1864, p. 156.

ble analogy which exists between the edifices of Palenque and the ruins of Yucatan places the latter under the same origin, although the visible progress of art which is apparent assigns different epochs for their construction."* So we have numerous authorities for the opinion, that the ruins in Chiapas and Yucatan were built by the same or by a kindred people, though at different periods of time, and that the language which prevails among the Indian population of that region at the present day, is the same which was used by their ancestors at the time of the conquest.

Captain Dupaix, who visited Yucatan in 1805, wrote a description of the ruins existing there, which was published in 1834; but it was reserved for M. Frédéric de Waldeck to call the attention of the European world to the magnificent remains of the Maya country, in his *Voyage pittoresque et archaeologique dans la province de Yucatan, pendant des années* 1834–1836, Folio, with plates, Paris, 1838. This learned centenarian became a member of the Antiquarian Society in 1839, and his death was noticed at the last meeting. Following him came the celebrated Eastern traveller, John L. Stephens, whose interesting account of his two visits to that country in 1840 and 1841, entitled *Incidents of travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan*, in two volumes, and *Incidents of travel in Yucatan*, in two volumes, is too familiar to require particular notice at this point. It may not be uninteresting to record the fact, that Mr. Stephens' voyages and explorations in Yucatan were made after the suggestion and with the advice of Hon. John R. Bartlett, of Providence, R. I., a member of this

* *Los trés siglos de la dominacion Espanola en Yucatan.* By Fr. Diego Lopez de Cogolludo,—Madrid, 1688.—Mérida, 1845, Lib. IV., Appendix A.

Society, who obtained for this traveller the copy of Waldeck's work which he used in his journeyings. Désiré Charnay, a French traveller, published in 1863 an account entitled *Cités et Ruines Americaines*, accompanied by a valuable folio Atlas of plates.

The writer of this report passed the winter of 1861 at Mérida, the capital of the Province of Yucatan, as the guest of Don David Casares, his classmate, and was received into his father's family with a kindness and an attentive hospitality which only those who know the warmth and sincerity of tropical courtesy can appreciate.* The father, Don Manuel Casares, was a native of Spain, who had resided in Cuba and in the United States. He was a gentleman of the old school, who, in the first part of his life in Yucatan, had devoted himself to teaching, as principal of a high school in the city of Mérida, but was then occupied in the management of a large plantation, upon which he resided most of the year, though his family lived in the city. He

* The family of Don Manuel Casares consisted of his wife—a very active and estimable lady,—three sons and six daughters. Of the sons, the two eldest, David and Primitivo, were educated in the United States. David Casares graduated with honor at Harvard College, and after a three years course at the *Ecole centrale des Arts et Manufactures*, in Paris, he passed a creditable examination for his degree. He was first employed, on his return to his own country, as Professor of Mathematics in the College of Minerva, a Jesuit College of Mérida, but is now occupied in managing the plantation of his father, who died in 1864. Primitivo, the second son, studied mechanics and engineering at the scientific school in Cambridge, and employed himself in several machine shops and foundries in Worcester and Lowell, to prepare himself to introduce the use of machinery in his native country. He returned to his home in company with the writer, but died a year after, stricken down by fever, brought on by over-work while superintending the erection of machinery, upon one of the estates in the neighborhood of Mérida. Both these men were great favorites in Cambridge and Jamaica Plain, where they resided, and are well remembered for their attractive and interesting qualities. The writer became acquainted with many of the prominent families of Mérida and Campeachy, from whom he received hospitable courtesies and attentions; but it would here be out of place to acknowledge personal obligations.

was possessed of great energy and much general information, and could speak English with ease and correctness. Being highly respected in the community, he was a man of weight and influence, the more in that he kept aloof from all political cabals, in which respect his conduct was quite exceptional. The Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg, in his *Histoire des nations civilizées du Mexique*, acknowledges the valuable assistance furnished him by Señor Casares, whom he describes as a learned Yucateco and ancient deputy to Mexico.*

Perhaps some of the impressions received, during a five months' visit, will be pardoned if introduced in this report. Yucatan is a province of Mexico, very isolated and but little known. It is isolated, from its geographical position, surrounded as it is on three sides by the waters of the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean; and it is but little known, because its commerce is insignificant, and its communication with other countries, and even with Mexico, is infrequent. It has few ports. Approach to the coast can only be accomplished in lighters or small boats; while ships are obliged to lie off at anchor, on account of the shallowness of the water covering the banks of sand, which stretch in broad belts around the peninsula. The country is of a limestone formation, and is only slightly elevated above the sea. Its general character is level, but in certain districts there are table lands; and a mountain range runs north-easterly to the town of Maxcanu, and thence extends south-westerly to near the centre of the State. The soil is generally of but little depth, but is exceedingly fertile.

* *Histoire des nations civilizées du Mexique*, by M. L'Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg, vol. II., page 578.

There are no rivers in the northern part of the province, and only the rivers Champoton, and the Uzumacinta with its branches, in the south-western portion; but there are several small lakes in the centre of Yucatan, and a large number of artificial ponds in the central and southern districts. The scarcity of water is the one great natural difficulty to be surmounted in most parts of the country; but a supply can commonly be obtained by digging wells, though often at so great a depth that the cost is formidable. The result is that the number of wells is small, and in the cities of Mérida and Campeachy rain water is frequently stored in large cisterns for domestic purposes. From the existence of cenotes or ponds with an inexhaustible supply of water at the bottom of caves, and because water can be reached by digging and blasting, though with great effort and expense, the theory prevails in Yucatan that their territory lies above a great underground lake, which offers a source of supply in those sections where lakes, rivers and springs, are entirely unknown.

A very healthful tropical climate prevails, and the year is divided into the wet and the dry season, the former beginning in June and lasting until October, the latter covering the remaining portions of the year. During the dry season of 1861–2, the thermometer ranged from 75° to 78° in December and January, and from 78° to 82° in February, March and April. Early in the dry season vegetation is luxuriant, the crops are ripening, and the country is covered with verdure; but as the season progresses the continued drouth, which is almost uninterrupted, produces the same effect upon the external aspect of the fields and woods as a northern winter. Most of the trees lose their leaves, the herbage dries up, and the roads

become covered with a thick dust During exceptionally dry seasons thousands of cattle perish from the entire lack of subsistence, first having exhausted the herbage and then the leaves and shrubbery.

The population of the peninsula is now about 502,-731, four-fifths of which are Indians and Mestizos or half-breeds. The general business of the country is agricultural, and the territory is divided into landed estates or farms, called haciendas, which are devoted to the breeding of cattle, and to raising jenniken or Sisal hemp, and corn. Cotton and sugar are also products, but not to an extent to admit of exportation. Some of the plantations are very large, covering an area of six or seven miles square, and employing hundreds of Indians as laborers.

Farm houses upon the larger estates are built of stone and lime, covered with cement, and generally occupy a central position, with private roads diverging from them. These houses, which are often very imposing and palatial, are intended only for the residence of the owners of the estate and their major-domos or superintendents. The huts for the Indian laborers are in close proximity to the residence of the proprietor, upon the roads which lead to it, and are generally constructed in an oval form with upright poles, held together by withes of bark; and they are covered inside and out with a coating of clay. The roofs are pointed, and also made with poles, and thatched with straw. They have no chimneys, and the smoke finds its way out from various openings purposely left. The huts have no flooring, are larger than the common wigwams of the northern Indians, and ordinarily contain but a single room. The cattle yards of the estate, called corrals, immediately join the

residence of the proprietor, and are supplied with water by artificial pumping. All the horses and cattle are branded, and roam at will over the estates, (which are not fenced, except for the protection of special crops), and resort daily to the yards to obtain water. This keeps the herds together. The Indian laborers are also obliged to rely entirely upon the common well of the estate for their supply of water.

The Indians of Yucatan are subject to a system of péonage, differing but little from slavery. The proprietor of an estate gives each family a hut, and a small portion of land to cultivate for its own use, and the right to draw water from the common well, and in return requires the labor of the male Indians one day in each week under superintendence. An account is kept with each Indian, in which all extra labor is credited, and he is charged for supplies furnished. Thus the Indian becomes indebted to his employer, and is held upon the estate by that bond. While perfectly free to leave his master if he can pay this debt, he rarely succeeds in obtaining a release. No right of corporal punishment is allowed by law, but whipping is practiced upon most of the estates.

The highways throughout the country are numerous, but generally are rough, and there is but little regular communication between the various towns. From the cities of Mérida and Campeachy, public conveyances leave at stated times for some of the more important towns; but travellers to other points are obliged to depend on private transportation. A railroad from Mérida to the port of Progreso, a distance of sixteen miles, was in process of being built, but the writer is not aware of its completion.

The peninsula is now divided into the States of Yucatan, with a population of 282,634, with Mérida for a capital, and Campeachy, with a population of 80,366, which has the city of Campeachy as its capital. The government is similar to our state governments, but is liable to be controlled by military interference. The States are dependent upon the central government at Mexico, and send deputies to represent them in the congress of the Republic. In the south-western part of the country there is a district very little known, which is inhabited by Indians who have escaped from the control of the whites and are called Sublevados. These revolted Indians, whose number is estimated at 139,731, carry on a barbarous war, and make an annual invasion into the frontier towns, killing the whites and such Indians as will not join their fortunes. With this exception, the safety of life and property is amply protected, and seems to be secured, not so much by the severity of the laws, as by the peaceful character of the inhabitants of all races. The trade of the country, except local traffic, is carried on by water. Regular steam communication occurs monthly between New York and the port of Mérida, via Havana, and occasionally barques freighted with corn, hides, hemp and other products of the country, and also carrying a small number of passengers, leave its ports for Havana, Vera Cruz and the United States. Freight and passengers along the coast are transported in flat bottomed canoes. Occasional consignments of freight and merchandise arrive by ship from France, Spain and other distant ports.

The cities of Mérida and Campeachy are much like Havana in general appearance. The former has a popula-

tion of 23,500, is the residence of the Governor, and contains the public buildings of the State, the cathedral—an imposing edifice,—the Bishop's palace, an ecclesiastical college, fifteen churches, a hospital, jail and theatre. The streets are wide and are laid out at right angles. The houses, which are generally of one story, are large, and built of stone laid in mortar or cement; and they are constructed in the Moorish style, with interior court yards surrounded with corridors, upon which the various apartments open. The windows are destitute of glass, but have strong wooden shutters; and those upon the public streets often project like bow windows, and are protected by heavy iron gratings. The inhabitants are exceedingly hospitable, and there is much cultivated society in both Mérida and Campeachy. As the business of the country is chiefly agricultural, many of the residents in the cities own haciendas in the country, where they entertain large parties of friends at the celebration of a religious festival on their plantations, or in the immediate neighborhood. The people are much given to amusements, and the serious duties of life are often obliged to yield to the enjoyments of the hour. The Catholic religion prevails exclusively, and has a very strong hold upon the population, both white and Indian, and the religious services of the church are performed with great ceremony, business of all kinds being suspended during their observance.

The aboriginal ruins, to which so much attention has been directed, are scattered in groups through the whole peninsula. Mérida is built upon the location of the ancient town Tihoo, and the materials of the Indian town were used in its construction. Sculptured stones, which formed the ornamental finish of Indian buildings, are to be seen in the

walls of the modern houses.* An artificial hill, called "El Castillo," was formerly the site of an Indian temple, and is curious as the only mound remaining of all those existing at the time of the foundation of the Spanish city. This mound is almost the only trace of Indian workmanship, in that immediate locality, which has not been removed or utilized in later constructions.† It appears that a large part of the building material throughout the province was taken from aboriginal edifices, and the great number of stone churches of considerable size, which have been built in all the small towns in that country, is proof of the abundance of this material.

The ruins of Uxmal, said to be the most numerous and imposing of any in the province, were visited by the writer in company with a party of sixteen gentlemen from Mérida, of whom two only had seen them before. The expedition was arranged out of courtesy to the visitor, and was performed on horseback. The direct distance was not more than sixty miles in a southerly direction, but the excursion was so managed as to occupy more than a week, during which time the hospitality of the haciendas along the route was depended upon for shelter and entertainment. Some of the plantations visited were of great extent, and among others, that called Guayalké was especially noticeable for its size, and also for the beauty and elegance of the farm house of the estate, which was constructed entirely of stone, and was truly palatial in its proportions. This building is fully described by Mr.

---

* *Historia de Yucatan.* By Cogolludo. Mérida, 1845. Lib. III., cap. VII.
† Ibid. Lib. IV., cap. XII.

Stephens.* The works of this writer form an excellent hand-book for the traveller. His descriptions are truthful, and the drawings by Mr. Catherwood are accurate, and convey a correct idea of the general appearance of ruins, and of points of interest which were visited; and the personal narrative offers a great variety of information, which could only be gathered by a traveller of much experience in the study of antiquities. Such at least is the opinion of the people of that country. His works are there quoted as high authority respecting localities which he visited and described; and modern Mexican philologists and antiquaries refer to Stephens' works and illustrations with confidence in his representations, and with respect and deference for his opinions and inferences.†

At various points along the route, portions of ruined edifices were seen but not explored. The ruins of Uxmal are distant about a mile from the hacienda buildings, and extend as far as the eye can reach. They belong to Don Simon Peon, a gentleman who, though he does not reside there, has so much regard for their preservation that he will not allow the ruins to be removed or interfered with for the improvement of the estate, in which respect he is an exception to many of the planters. Here it may be remarked, that the inhabitants generally show little interest in the antiquities of their country, and no public effort is made to preserve them. The ruins which yet remain undisturbed have escaped destruction, in most instances, only

* Travels in Cent. Am., Chiapas and Yucatan. By J. L. Stephens. New York, 1858. vol. II., page 403.

† *Geographia de las Lenguas y Carta Ethnographica de México.* By Manuel Orozco y Berra, México, 1864, p. 100. Ibid. p. 115. *Quadro descriptivo y comparativo de las Lenguas indigenas de México.* By D. Francisco Pimentel. México, 1865. Tom. 11, p. 86.

because their materials have not been required in constructing modern buildings. Much of the country is thinly inhabited, and parts of it are heavily wooded. It is there that the remains of a prior civilization have best escaped the hand of man, more to be dreaded than the ravages of time.

The stone edifices of Uxmal are numerous, and are generally placed upon artificial elevations; they are not crowded together, but are scattered about singly and in groups over a large extent of territory. The most conspicuous is an artificial pyramidal mound, upon the top of which is a stone building two stories in height, supposed to have been used as a sacrificial temple. One side of this mound is perpendicular; the opposite side is approached by a flight of stone steps. The building on the top, and the steps by which the ascent is made are in good preservation. Some of the large buildings are of magnificent proportions, and are much decorated with bas reliefs of human figures and faces in stone, and with other stone ornaments. The writer does not recollect seeing any stucco ornamentation at this place, though such material is used elsewhere. What are popularly called "House of the Governor" and "House of the Nuns," are especially remarkable for their wonderful preservation; so that from a little distance they appear perfect and entire, except at one or two points which look as if struck by artillery. The rooms in the ruins are of various sizes, and many of them could be made habitable with little labor, on removing the rubbish which has found its way into them.

The impression received from an inspection of the ruins of Uxmal was, that they had been used as public buildings, and residences of officers, priests and high dignitaries. Both

Stephens and Prescott are of the opinion that some of the ruins in this territory were built and occupied by the direct ancestors of the Indians, who now remain as slaves upon the soil where once they ruled as lords.* The antiquity of other remains evidently goes back to an earlier epoch, and antedates the arrival of the Spaniards. If the Indians of the time of the conquest occupied huts like those of the Indians of to-day, it is not strange that all vestiges of their dwellings should have disappeared. Mr. Stephens gives an interesting notice of the first formal conveyance of the property of Uxmal, made by the Spanish government in 1673, which was shown him by the present owner, in which the fact that the Indians, then, worshipped idols in some of the existing edifices on that estate, is mentioned. Another legal instrument, in 1688, describes the livery of seizin in the following words, "In virtue of the power and authority by which the same title is given to me by the said governor, and complying with its terms, I took by the hands the said Lorenzo de Evia, and he walked with me all over Uxmal and its buildings, opened and shut some doors that had several rooms (connected), cut within the space several trees, picked up fallen stones and threw them down, drew water from one of the aguadas (artificial ponds) of the said place of Uxmal, and performed other acts of possession."† These facts are interesting as indicating actual or recent occupation; and a careful investigation of documents relating to the various estates, of which the greater part are said to be written in the Maya language, might throw light upon the history of particular localities.

* Incidents of Travel in Yucatan, Stephens, vol. II., page 445. History of the Conquest of Mexico, Prescott, vol. III., page 370.

† Incidents of Travel in Yucatan, vol. I., page 323.

The Maya Indians are shorter and stouter, and have a more delicate exterior than the North American Savages. Their hands and feet are small, and the outlines of their figures are graceful. They are capable of enduring great fatigue, and the privation of food and drink, and bear exposure to the tropical sun for hours with no covering for the head, without being in the least affected. Their bearing evinces entire subjection and abasement, and they shun and distrust the whites. They do not manifest the cheerfulness of the negro slave, but maintain an expression of indifference, and are destitute of all curiosity or ambition. These peculiarities are doubtless the results of the treatment they have received for generations. The half-breeds, or Mestizos, prefer to associate with the whites rather than with the Indians; and as a rule all the domestic service throughout the country is performed by that class. Mestizos often hold the position of major-domos, or superintendents of estates, but Indians of pure blood are seldom employed in any position of trust or confidence. They are punctilious in their observance of the forms and ceremonies of the Catholic religion, and a numerous priesthood is maintained largely by the contributions of this race. The control exercised by the clergy is very powerful, and their assistance is always sought by the whites in cases of controversy. The Indians are indolent and fond of spectacles, and the church offers them an opportunity of celebrating many feast days, of which they do not fail to avail themselves.

When visiting the large estate of Chactun, belonging to Don José Dominguez, thirty miles south-west of Mérida, at a sugar rancho called Orkintok, the writer saw a large

ruin similar to that called the "House of the Nuns" at Uxmal. It was a building of a quadrangular shape, with apartments opening on an interior court in the centre of the quadrangle. The building was in good preservation, and some of the rooms were used as depositories for corn. The visiting party breakfasted in one of the larger apartments. From this hacienda an excursion was made to Maxcanu, to visit an artificial mound, which had a passage into the interior, with an arched stone ceiling and retaining walls.* This passage was upon a level with the base of the mound, and branched at right angles into other passages for hundreds of feet. Nothing appeared in these passages to indicate their purpose. The labyrinth was visited by the light of candles and torches, and the precaution of using a line of cords was taken to secure a certainty of egress. A thorough exploration was prevented by the obstructions of the *débris* of the fallen roof. Other artificial mounds encountered elsewhere had depressions upon the top, doubtless caused by the falling in of interior passages or apartments. There is no account of the excavation of Yucatan mounds for historical purposes, though Cogolludo says there were other mounds existing at Mérida in 1542, besides "El grande de los Kues," which, certainly, have now disappeared; but no account of their construction has come down to us.† The same author also says, that, with the stone constructions of the Indian city churches and houses were built, besides the convent and church of the Mejorada, and also the church of the Franciscans, and that there was still more material

* Incidents of Travel in Yucatan, Stephens, vol. I., page 212.
† *Historia de Yucatan.* Cogolludo. Lib. III., Cap. XI.

left for others which they desired to build.* It is then, certainly, a plausible supposition that the great mounds were many of them constructed with passages like that at Orkintok, and that they have furnished from their interiors worked and squared stones, which were used in the construction of the modern city of Mérida by the Spanish conquerors.

When the Spanish first invaded Mexico and Yucatan they brought with them a small number of horses, which animals were entirely unknown to the natives, and were made useful not only as cavalry but also in creating a superstitious reverence for the conquerors, since the Indians at first regarded the horse as endowed with divine attributes. Cortez in his expedition from the city of Mexico to Honduras in 1524, passed through the State of Chiapas near the ruins called Palenque,—of which ancient city, however, no mention is made in the accounts of that expedition,—and rested at an Indian town situated upon an island in Lake Peten in Guatemala. This island was then the property of an emigrant tribe of Maya Indians; and Bernal Diaz, the historian of the expedition, says, that "its houses and lofty teocallis glistened in the sun, so that it might be seen for a distance of two leagues." According to Prescott, " Cortez on his departure left among this friendly people one of his horses, which had been disabled by an injury in the foot. The Indians felt a reverence for the animal, as in some way connected with the mysterious power of the white men. When their visitors had gone they offered flowers to the horse, and as it is said, prepared for him many savory messes of poultry,

* *Historia de Yucatan.* Cogolludo. Lib. III., Cap. VII.

such as they would have administered to their own sick. Under this extraordinary diet the poor animal pined away and died. The affrighted Indians raised his effigy in stone, and placing it upon one of their teocallis, did homage to it as to a deity."* At the hacienda of Don Manuel Casares called Xuyum, fifteen miles north-east from Mérida, a number of cerros, or mounds, and the ruins of several small stone structures built on artificial elevations, were pointed out to the writer; and his attention was called to two sculptured heads of horses which lay upon the ground in the neighborhood of some ruined buildings. They were of the size of life, and represented, cut from solid limestone, the heads and necks of horses with the mane clipped, so that it stood up from the ridge of their necks like the mane of the zebra. The workmanship of the figures was artistic, and the inference made at the time was, that these figures had served as bas reliefs on ruins in that vicinity. On mentioning the fact of the existence of these figures to Dr. Carl Hermann Berendt, who was about to revisit Yucatan, in 1869, he manifested much interest in regard to them, and expressed his intention to visit this plantation when he should be in Mérida. But later inquiries have failed to discover any further trace of these figures. Dr. Berendt had never seen any representation of horses upon ruins in Central America, and considered the existence of the sculptures the more noteworthy, from the fact that horses were unknown to the natives till the time of the Spanish discovery. The writer supposes that these figures were sculptured by Indians after the conquest, and that they were used as decorations upon buildings erected at the same time and by the same hands.

* History of the Conquest of Mexico. Prescott, Vol. III., page 294.

At the town of Izamal, and also at Zilam, the writer saw gigantic artificial mounds, with stone steps leading up to a broad level space on the top. There are no remains of structures on these elevations, but it seems probable that the space was once occupied by buildings. At Izamal, which was traditionally the sacred city of the Mayas, a human face in stucco is still attached to the perpendicular side of one of the smaller cerros or mounds. The face is of gigantic size, and can be seen from a long distance. It may have been a representation of Zamna, the founder of Mayan civilization in Yucatan, to whose worship that city was especially dedicated.

From this slight glance at the remains in the Mayan territory we are led to say a few words about their history. In the absence of all authentic accounts, the traditions of the Mayas, and the writings of Spanish chroniclers and ecclesiastics, offer the only material for our object. M. L'Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg, the learned French traveller and Archæologist, in his *Histoire des Nations Civilisées du Mexique et de l'Amérique Centrale durant les siècles antérieurs à Christophe Columb*, has given a very voluminous and interesting account of Mayan history prior to the arrival of Europeans. It was collected by a careful study of Spanish and Mayan manuscripts, and will serve at least to open the way for further investigation to those who do not agree with its inferences and conclusions. The well known industry and enthusiasm of this scholar have contributed very largely to encourage the study of American Archæology in Europe, and his name has been most prominently associated with the later efforts of the French in the scientific study of Mexican antiquities. A brief

notice of some of the marked epochs of Mayan history, as he presents them, will not perhaps be out of place in this connection.

Modern investigations, in accord with the most ancient traditions, make Tobasco and the mouths of the Tobasco river, and the Uzumacinta, the first cradle of civilization in Central America. At the epoch of the Spanish invasion, these regions, and the interior provinces which bordered on them, were inhabited by a great number of Indian tribes. There was a time when the major part of the population of that region spoke a common language, and this language was either the Tzendale, spoken to-day by a great number of the Indians in the State of Chiapas, or more likely the Maya, the only language of the peninsula of Yucatan. When the Spaniards first appeared, the native population already occupied the peninsula, and a great part of the interior region of that portion of the continent. Learned Indians have stated, that they heard traditionally from their ancestors, that at first the country was peopled by a race which came from the east, and that their God had delivered them from the pursuit of certain others, in opening to them a way of escape by means of the sea. According to tradition, Votan, a priestly ruler, came to Yucatan many centuries before the Christian era, and established his first residence at Nachan, now popularly called Palenque. The astonishment of the natives at the coming of Votan was as great as the sensation produced later at the appearance of the Spaniards. Among the cities which recognized Votan as founder, Mayapan occupied a foremost rank and became the capital of the Yucatan peninsula; a title which it lost and recovered at various times, and kept until very near to the date of the arrival

of the Spaniards. The ruins of Mayapan are situated in the centre of the province, about twenty-four miles from those of Uxmal. Mayapan, Tulha—situated upon a branch of the Tobasco river,—and Palenque, are considered the most ancient cities of Central America.

Itzamna

Zamna however was revered by the Mayas as their greatest lawgiver, and as the most active organizer of their powerful kingdom. He was a ruler of the same race as Votan, and his arrival took place a few years after the building of Palenque. The first enclosure of Mayapan surrounded only the official and sacred buildings, but later this city was much extended, so that it became one of the largest of ancient America. Zamna is said to have reigned many years, and to have introduced arts and sciences which enriched his kingdom. He was buried at Izamal, which became a shrine where multitudes of pilgrims rendered homage to this benefactor of their country. Here was established an oracle, famous throughout that whole region, which was also resorted to for the cure of diseases.

Mayan chronology fixes the year 258 of the Christian era as the date when the Tutul-Xius, a princely family from Tulha, left Guatemala and appeared in Yucatan. They conciliated the good will of the king of Mayapan and rendered themselves vassals of the crown of Maya. The Tutul-Xius founded Mani and also Tihoo, afterwards the modern city of Mérida. The divinity most worshipped at Tihoo was Baklum-Chaam, the Priapus of the Mayas, and the great temple erected as a sanctuary to this god was but little inferior to the temple of Izamal. It bore the title "*Yahan-Kuna*," most beautiful temple. A letter from Father Bienvenida to Philip II., speaks of this city in these terms, "The city is

30 leagues in the interior, and is called Mérida, which name it takes on account of the beautiful buildings which it contains, because in the whole extent of country which has been discovered, not one so beautiful has been met with. The buildings are finely constructed of hammered stone, laid without cement, and are 30 feet in height. On the summit of these edifices are four apartments, divided into cells like those of the monks, which are twenty feet long and ten feet wide. The posts of the doors are of a single stone, and the roof is vaulted. The priests have established a convent of St. Francis in the part which has been discovered. It is proper that what has served for the worship of the demon should be transformed into a temple for the service of God." *

Later in history a prince named Cukulcan arrived from the west and established himself at Chichen-Itza. Owing to quarrels in the Mayan territory, he was asked to take the supreme government of the empire, with Mayapan as the capital city. By his management the government was divided into three absolute sovereignties, which upon occasion might act together and form one. The seven succeeding sovereigns of Mayapan embellished and improved the country, and it was very prosperous. At this time the city of Uxmal, governed by one of the Tutul-Xius, began to rival the city of Mayapan in extent of territory and in the number of its vassals. The towns of Noxcacab, Kabah, Bocal and Nŏhpat were among its dependencies.

The date of the foundation of Uxmal has been fixed at A. D. 864. At this epoch, great avenues paved with stone,

* *Collection des Mémoires sur l'Amérique, Recueil des Pièces sur le Méxique trad., par Ternaux-Compans*, p. 307.

were constructed, the most remarkable of which appeared to have been that which extends from the interior to the shores of the sea opposite Cozumel, upon the North-East coast, and the highway which led to Izamal constructed for the convenience of pilgrims. A long peace then reigned between the princes of the several principal cities, which was brought to an end by an alliance formed against the King of Mayapan. The rulers of Chichen and Uxmal dared openly to condemn the conduct of the king of Mayapan, because he had employed hirelings to protect himself against his own people, who were provoked by his tyrannical exactions, and had transferred his residence to Kimpech, upon which town and neighborhood, alone, he bestowed his royal favors. His people were especially outraged by the introduction of slavery, which had been hitherto unknown to them. A change of rulers at Mayapan failed to allay the troubles in the empire, and by a conspiracy of the independent princes, the new tyrant of Mayapan was deposed, and he was defeated in a three days battle at the city of Mayapan. The palace was taken, and the king and his family were brutally murdered. The city was then given to the flames and was left a vast and desolate heap of ruins.

Then one of the Tutul-Xius, prince of Uxmal, on his return, was crowned and received the title of supreme monarch of the Mayas. This king governed the country with great wisdom, extending his protection over the foreign mercenaries of the former tyrant, and offering them an asylum not far from Uxmal, where are now the remains of the towns Pockboc, Sakbache and Lebna. It is believed that the city of Mayapan was then rebuilt,

and existed shorn of some of its former greatness, but later it was again the cause of dissension in the kingdom, and was again destroyed. This event is said to have occurred in A. D. 1464. Peace then reigned in Yucatan for more than twenty years, and there was a period of great abundance and prosperity. At the end of this time the country was subjected to a series of disasters. Hurricanes occurred, doing incalculable damage; plagues followed with great destruction of life; and thus began the depopulation of the peninsula. Then the Spaniards arrived, and the existence of Indian power in Yucatan came to an end.

The foregoing is necessarily an abridged, hastily written, and very imperfect sketch of some of the more prominent facts connected with the supposed early history of Mayan civilization, which have been brought together with care, labor, and great elaboration, by the Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg. Much of this history is accepted as correct from the weight of the authorities which support and corroborate it, but the whole subject is still an open one in the opinion of scholars and archæologists.

The learned Abbé is now no more, but the record of his labors exists in his published works, and in the impulse which he gave to archæological investigations. We receive the first notice of his death from Mr. Hubert Howe Bancroft, who pays the following eloquent tribute to his memory: "Brasseur de Bourbourg devoted his life to the study of American primitive history. In actual knowledge pertaining to his chosen subjects, no man ever equalled or approached him. Besides being an indefatigable student, he was an elegant writer. In the last decade of his life, he conceived a new and complicated theory respecting the

origin of the American people, or rather the origin of Europeans and Asiatics from America, made known to the world in his '*Quatre Lettres.*' His attempted translation of the manuscript *Troano* was made in support of this theory. By reason of the extraordinary nature of the views expressed, and the author's well-known tendency to build magnificent structures on a slight foundation, his later writings were received, for the most part by critics utterly incompetent to understand them, with a sneer, or what seems to have grieved the writer more, in silence. Now that the great Americanist is dead, while it is not likely that his theories will ever be received, his zeal in the cause of antiquarian science, and the many valuable works from his pen will be better appreciated. It will be long ere another shall undertake, with equal devotion and ability, the well nigh hopeless task." *

Among the historical records relating to the aborigines of Spanish America, there is none more valuable than the manuscript of Diego de Landa—Second Bishop of Yucatan, in 1573,—which was discovered and published by M. de Bourbourg. It contains an account of the manners and customs of the Maya Indians, a description of some of their chief towns; and more important than all besides, it furnishes an alphabet, which is the most probable key that is known to us for reading the hieroglyphics which are found upon many of the Yucatan ruins. The alphabet, though imperfect in itself, may at some future time explain, not only the inscriptions, but also the manuscripts of this ancient period. Although an attempt of its discoverer, to

* The Native Races of the Pacific States of North America. By Hubert H. Bancroft. San Francisco, 1875. Vol. II., page 780.

make use of the alphabet for interpreting the characters of the manuscript *Troano*, has failed to satisfy scholars, its study still engages the attention of other learned archæologists and antiquaries.

Bishop Landa gives the following description of Mayan manuscripts or books: "They wrote their books on a large, highly decorated leaf, doubled in folds and enclosed between two boards, and they wrote on both sides in columns corresponding to the folds. The paper they made of the roots of a tree, and gave it a white varnish on which one could write well. This art was known by certain men of high rank, and because of their knowledge of it they were much esteemed, but they did not practice the art in public. This people also used certain characters or letters, with which they wrote in their books of their antiquities and their sciences: and by means of these, and of figures, and by certain signs in their figures, they understood their writings, and made them understood, and taught them. We found among them a great number of books of these letters of theirs, and because they contained nothing which had not superstitions and falsities of the devil, we burned them all; at which they were exceedingly sorrowful and troubled." *

In Cogolludo's Historia de Yucatan, there is an account of a destruction of Indian antiquities by Bishop Landa, called an auto-dă-fē, of which we give a translation: "This Bishop, who has passed for an illustrious saint among the priests of this province, was still an extravagant fanatic, and so hard hearted that he became cruel.

* *Relation des choses de Yucatan.* By Diego de Landa, Paris, 1864, pp. 44, 316.

One of the heaviest accusations against him, which his apologists could not deny or justify, was the famous auto-dä-fē, in which he proceeded in a most arbitrary and despotic manner. Father Landa destroyed many precious memorials, which to-day might throw a brilliant light over our ancient history, still enveloped in an almost impenetrable chaos until the period of the conquest. Landa saw in books that he could not comprehend, cabalistic signs, and invocations to the devil. From notes in a letter written by the Yucatan Jesuit, Domingo Rodriguez, in 1805, we offer the following enumeration of the articles destroyed and burned.

5000 Idols, of distinct forms and dimensions.
13 Great stones, that had served as altars.
22 Small stones, of various forms.
27 Rolls of signs and hieroglyphics, on deer skins.
197 Vases, of all dimensions and figures.

Other precious curiosities are spoken of, but we have no description of them." *

Captain Antonio del Rio gives an account of another destruction of Mayan antiquities, at Huegetan: "The Bishop of Chiapas, Don Francisco Nunez de la Vega, in his *Diocesan Constitution*, printed at Rome in 1702, says, that the treasure consisted of some large earthen vases of one piece, closed with covers of the same material, on which were represented in stone the figures of the ancient pagans whose names are in the calendar, with some *chalchihuitls*, which are solid hard stones of a green color, and other superstitious figures, together with historical works of Indian origin. These were taken from a cave and given up, when

* *Historia de Yucatan.* Cogolludo. Lib. VI. Appendix A, 1.

they were publicly burned in the square Huegetan, on our visit to that province in 1691." *

Prescott also mentions the destruction of manuscripts and other works of art in Mexico: "The first Arch-Bishop of Mexico, Don Juan de Zumarraga, a name that should be as immortal as that of Omar, collected these paintings from every quarter, especially from Tescuco, the most cultivated capital of Anahuac, and the great depository of the national archives. He then caused them to be piled up in a mountain heap, as it was called by the Spanish writers themselves, in the market place of Tlatelolco, and reduced them all to ashes." †

It is not then to be wondered at, that so few original Mayan manuscripts have escaped and are preserved, when such a spirit of destruction animated the Spanish priests at the time of the conquest. Mr. Hubert Howe Bancroft, whom we are happy to recognize as a member of this Society, in a systematic and exhaustive treatment of the history and present condition of the Indians of the Pacific States, has presented a great amount of valuable information, much of which has never before been offered to the public; and in his wide view, he comprehends important observations on Central American antiquities. He gives this account of existing ancient Maya manuscripts or books. "Of the aboriginal Maya manuscripts, three specimens only, so far as I know, have been preserved. These are the *Mexican Manuscript No.* 2, of the Imperial Library at Paris; the *Dresden Codex*, and the *Manuscript Troano*. Of the first, we only know of its existence, and the similarity

* Description of an ancient city near Palenque. Page 32.
† Prescott's Conquest of Mexico. Vol. I., page 101.

of its characters to those of the other two, and of the sculptured tablets. The *Dresden Codex* is preserved in the Royal Library of Dresden. The *Manuscript Troano* was found about the year 1865, in Madrid, by the Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg. Its name comes from that of its possessor in Madrid, Sr. Tro y Ortolano, and nothing whatever is known of its origin. The original is written on a strip of *maguey* paper, about fourteen feet long, and nine inches wide, the surface of which is covered with a whitish varnish, on which the figures are painted in black, red, blue and brown. It is folded fan-like into thirty-five folds, presenting when shut much the appearance of a modern large octavo volume. The hieroglyphics cover both sides of the paper, and the writing is consequently divided into seventy pages, each about five by nine inches, having been apparently executed after the paper was folded, so that the folding does not interfere with the written matter." *

It is probable that early manuscripts, as well as others of less antiquity than the above mentioned, but of great historical importance, yet remain buried among the archives of the many churches and convents of Yucatan; and it is also true that a systematic search for them has never been prosecuted. A thorough examination of ecclesiastical and antiquarian collections in that country, would be a service to the students of archæology which ought not to be longer deferred.

The discovery of the continent of America was made near this Peninsula, and the accounts of early Spanish voyagers contain meagre but still valuable descriptions of the country, as it appeared at the time it was first visited by

* The Native Races of the Pacific States. By Hubert Howe Bancroft. Vol. II., page 771.

Europeans. It may be interesting to call to mind some of the circumstances connected with their voyages, and with the first settlement of Yucatan by the Spaniards, and also to notice briefly some of the difficulties met with in obtaining a foot-hold in the new world.

Columbus on his fourth and last voyage, in 1502, left the Southern coast of Cuba, and sailing in a South-westerly direction reached Guanaja, an island now called Bonacca, one of a group thirty miles distant from Honduras, and the shores of the western continent. From this island he sailed southward as far as Panama, and thence returned to Cuba on his way to Spain, after passing six months on the Northern coasts of Panama. In 1506 two of Columbus' companions, De Solis and Pinzon, were again in the Gulf of Honduras, and examined the coast westward as far as the Gulf of Dulce, still looking for a passage to the Indian Ocean. Hence they sailed northward, and discovered a great part of Yucatan, though that country was not then explored, nor was any landing made.

The first actual exploration was made by Francisco Hernandez de Cordova in 1517, who landed on the Island Las Mugeres. Here he found stone towers, and chapels thatched with straw, in which were arranged in order several idols resembling women—whence the name which the Island received. The Spaniards were astonished to see, for the first time in the new world, stone edifices of architectural beauty, and also to perceive the dress of the natives, who wore shirts and cloaks of white and colored cotton, with head-dresses of feathers, and were ornamented with ear drops and jewels of gold and silver. From this island, Hernandez went to Cape Catoche, which he named from the

answer given him by some of the natives, who, when asked what town it was, answered, "Cotohe," that is, a house. A little farther on the Spaniards asked the name of a large town near by. The natives answered "Tectatan," "Tectatan," which means "I do not understand," and the Spaniards thought that this was the name, and have ever since given to the country the corrupted name Yucatan. Hernandez then went to Campeachy, called Kimpech by the natives. He landed, and the chief of the town and himself embraced each other, and he received as presents cloaks, feathers, large shells, and sea crayfish set in gold and silver, together with partridges, turtle doves, goslings, cocks, hares, stags and other animals, which were good to eat, and bread made from Indian corn, and an abundance of tropical fruits. There was in this place a square stone tower with steps, on the top of which there was an idol, which had at its side two cruel animals, represented as if they were desirous of devouring it. There was also a great serpent forty-seven feet long, cut in stone, devouring a lion as broad as an ox. This idol was besmeared with human blood. Champoton was next visited, where the Spaniards were received in a hostile manner, and were defeated by the natives, who killed twenty, wounded fifty, and made two prisoners, whom they afterwards sacrificed. Cordova then returned to Cuba, and reported the discovery of Yucatan, showed the various utensils in gold and silver which he had taken from the temple at Kimpech, and declared the wonders of a country whose culture, edifices and inhabitants, were so different from all he had previously seen; but he stated that it was necessary to conquer the natives in order to obtain gold, and the riches which were in their possession.

Neither Kimpech nor Champoton were under Mexican rule, but there was frequent traffic between the Mayas and the subjects of the empire of Anahuac. Diégo Vélasquez de Leon was at that time governor of Cuba, and he planned another expedition into the rich country just discovered. Four ships, equipped and placed under the command of Juan de Grijalva, sailed, in 1518, and first stopped at the Island of Cozumel, which was then famous with the Yucatan Indians, by reason of an annual pilgrimage of which its temples were the object. In their progress along the coast, the navigators saw many small edifices, which they took for towers, but which were nothing less than altars or teocallis, erected to the gods of the sea, protectors of the pilgrims. On the fifth day a pyramid came in view, on the summit of which there was what appeared to be a tower. It was one of the temples, whose elegant and symmetrical shape made a profound impression upon all. Near by they saw a great number of Indians making much noise with drums. Grijalva waited for the morrow before disembarking, and then setting his forces in battle array, marched towards the temple, where on arriving he planted the standard of Castile. Within the sanctuary he found several idols, and the traces of sacrifice. The chaplain of the fleet celebrated mass before the astonished natives. It was the first time that this rite had been performed on the new continent, and the Indians assisted in respectful silence, although they comprehended nothing of the ceremonies. When the priest had descended from the altar, the Indians allowed the strangers peaceably to visit their houses, and brought them an abundance of food of all kinds. Grijalva then sailed along

the coast of Yucatan. The astonishment of the Spaniards at the aspect of the elegant buildings, whose construction gave them a high idea of the civilization of the country, increased as they advanced. The architecture appeared to them much superior to anything they had hitherto met with in the new world, and they cried out with their commander that they had found a New Spain, which name has remained, and from Yucatan has been applied to the neighboring regions in that part of the American continent. Grijalva found the cities and villages of the South-western coast like those he had already seen, and the natives resembled those of the north and east in dress and manners. But at Champoton the Indians were, as before, hostile, and were ready to use their arms to repel peaceful advances as well as aggressions. The Spaniards succeeded however, after a bloody struggle, in gaining possession of Champoton and putting the Indians to flight. Thence Grijalva went southward to the river Tobasco, and held an interview with the Lord of Centla, who cordially received him, and presents were mutually exchanged.

Still the native nobles were not slow in showing that they were troubled at the presence of the strangers. Many times they indicated with the finger the Western country, and repeated with emphasis the word, at that time mysterious to Europeans, Culhua, signifying Mexico. The fleet then sailed northward, exploring the coast of Mexico as far as Vera Cruz, visiting several maritime towns. Francisco de Montejo, afterwards so celebrated in Yucatan history, was the first European to place his foot upon the soil of Mexico. Here, Grijalva's intercourse with the natives was of the most friendly description, and a system of barter was

established, by which in exchange for articles of Spanish manufacture, pieces of native gold, a variety of golden ornaments enriched with precious stones, and a quantity of cotton mantles and other garments, were obtained. Intending to prosecute his discoveries further, Grijalva despatched these objects to Vélasquez at Cuba, in a ship commanded by Pedro de Alvarado, who also took charge of the sick and wounded of the expedition. Grijalva himself then ascended the Mexican coast as far as Panuco (the present Tampico), whence he returned to Cuba. By this expedition the external form of Yucatan was exactly ascertained, and the existence of the more powerful and extensive empire of Mexico was made known.

Upon the arrival of Alvarado at Cuba, bringing wonderful accounts of his discoveries in Yucatan and Mexico, together with the valuable curiosities he had obtained in that country, Vélasquez was greatly pleased with the results of the expedition; but was still considerably disappointed that Grijalva had neglected one of the chief purposes of his voyage, namely, that of founding a colony in the newly discovered country. Another expedition was resolved on for the purpose of establishing a permanent foothold in the new territory, and the command was intrusted to Hernando Cortez. This renowned captain sailed from Havana, February 19, 1519, with a fleet of nine vessels, which were to rendezvous at the Island of Cozumel. On landing, Cortez pursued a pacific course towards the natives, but endeavored to substitute the Roman Catholic religion for the idolatrous rites which prevailed in the several temples of that sacred Island. He found it easier to induce the natives to accept new images than to give up those which

they had hitherto worshipped. After charging the Indians to observe the religious ceremonies which he had prescribed, and receiving a promise of compliance with his wishes, Cortez again sailed and doubled cape Catoche, following the contour of the gulf as far south as the river Tobasco. Here, disembarking, notwithstanding the objections of the Indians, he took possession of Centla, a town remarkable for its extent and population, and a centre of trade with the neighboring empire of Mexico, whence were obtained much tribute and riches. After remaining there long enough to engage in a sanguinary battle, which ended in a decisive victory for the Spaniards, Cortez reëmbarked and went forward to his famous conquest of Mexico.

From the time when Cortez left the river Tobasco, his mind was fixed upon the attractions of the more distant land of Mexico, and not upon the prosecution of further discoveries upon the Western shores of Yucatan; and until 1524, for a period of more than five years, this peninsula remained unnoticed by the Spaniards. Then Cortez left Mexico, which he had already subjugated, for a journey of discovery to Honduras, and for the purpose of calling to account, for insubordination and usurpation of authority, Cristoval de Olid, whom he had previously sent to that region from Vera Cruz. He received from the princes of Xicalanco and Tobasco maps and charts, giving the natural features of the country, and the limits of the various States. His march lay through the Southern boundaries of the great Mayan empire. Great were the privations of this overland march, which passed through a desolate and uninhabited region, and near the ruins of Palenque, but none of the

historians of the expedition take notice of the remains. When Cortez finally arrived at Nito, a town on the border of Honduras, he received tidings of the death of Cristoval de Olid, and that his coming would be hailed with joy by the Spanish troops stationed there, who were now without a leader. From the arrival of Cortez at Nito, the association of his name with the province of Yucatan is at an end, and the further history of that peninsula was developed by those who afterwards undertook the conquest of that country.

Francisco de Montejo was a native of Salamanca, in Spain, of noble descent and considerable wealth. He had been among the first attracted to the new world, and accompanied the expedition of Grijalva to Yucatan in 1518, and that of Cortez in 1519. By Cortez this captain was twice sent to Spain from Mexico, with despatches and presents for the Emperor, Charles V. In the year 1527, Montejo solicited the government of Yucatan, in order to conquer and pacificate that country, and received permission to conquer and people the islands of Yucatan and Cozumel, at his own cost. He was to exercise the office of Governor and Captain General for life, with the title of Adelantado, which latter office at his death should descend to his heirs and successors forever. Montejo disposed of his hereditary property, and with the money thus raised embarked with about four hundred troops, exclusive of sailors, and set sail from Spain for the conquest of Yucatan. Landing at Cozumel, and afterwards at some point on the North-eastern coast of the peninsula, Montejo met with determined resistance from the natives; and a battle took place at Aké, in which one hundred and fifty Spaniards were killed, and nearly all the

remainder were wounded, or worn out with fatigue. Fortunately, the Indians did not follow the retreating survivors into their entrenchments, or they would have exterminated the Spaniards. The remnants of this force next appeared at Campeachy, where they established a precarious settlement, and were at last obliged to withdraw, so that in 1535 not a Spaniard remained in Yucatan.

Don Francisco de Montejo, son of the Adelantado, was sent by his father from Tobasco, in 1537, to attempt again the conquest of Yucatan. He made a settlement at Champoton, and after two years of the most disheartening experiences at this place, a better fortune opened to the Spaniards. The veteran Montejo made over to his son all the powers given to him by the Emperor, together with the title of Adelantado; and the new governor established himself at Kimpech in 1540, where he founded a city, calling it San Francisco de Campeachy. From thence an expedition went northward to the Indian town Tihoo, and a settlement was made, which was attacked by an immense body of natives. The small band of Spaniards, a little more than two hundred in all, were successful in holding their ground, and, turning the tide of battle, pursued their retreating foes, and inflicted upon them great slaughter. The Indians were completely routed, and never again rallied for a general battle. The conquerors founded the present city of Mérida on the site of the Indian town, with all legal formalities, in January, 1542.*

But though conquered the Indians were not subjugated. They cherished an inveterate hatred of the Spaniards, which manifested itself on every possible occasion, and it required

* *Historia de Yucatan.* Cogolludo. Lib. III, cap. VII.

the utmost watchfulness and energy to suppress the insurrections which from time to time broke out; and the complete pacification of Yucatan was not secured before the year 1547.

Hon. Lewis H. Morgan, in an interesting article in the North American Review, entitled "*Montezuma's Dinner*," makes the statement that "American aboriginal history is based upon a misconception of Indian life which has remained substantially unquestioned to the present hour." He considers that the accounts of Spanish writers were filled with extravagancies, exaggerations and absurdities, and that the grand terminology of the old world, created under despotic and monarchial institutions, was drawn upon to explain the social and political condition of the Indian races. He states, that while "the histories of Spanish America may be trusted in whatever relates to the acts of the Spaniards, and to the acts and personal characteristics of the Indians; in whatever relates to Indian society and government, their social relations and plan of life, they are wholly worthless, because they learned nothing and knew nothing of either." On the other hand, we are told that "Indian society could be explained as completely, and understood as perfectly, as the civilized society of Europe or America, by finding its exact organization."* Mr. Morgan proposes to accomplish this result by the study of the manners and customs of Indian races whose histories are better known. In the familiar habits of the Iroquois, and their practice as to communism of living, and the construction of their dwellings, Mr. Morgan finds the key to all the palatial edifices encountered by Cortez on his invasion of Mexico:

* North American Review. Boston, April, 1876. No. 251, page 265.

and he wishes to include, also, the magnificent remains in the Mayan territory. He would have us believe, that the highly ornamental stone structures of Uxmal, Chichen-Itza, and Palenque, were but joint tenement houses, which should be studied with attention to the usages of Indian tribes of which we have a more certain record, and not from contemporaneous historical accounts of eye witnesses.

In answer to Mr. Morgan's line of argument, it may be said, that the agreement of early voyagers and chroniclers, of whom there is so large a number, as to the main facts, is strong evidence that their impressions, as stated, were founded upon what they saw, and not on pictures of the imagination. Moreover, the existing undecyphered manuscripts, together with the hieroglyphical and symbolical inscriptions upon buildings, traced in characters similar to those found in aboriginal manuscripts, prove that there was a literature among the Mayan and Aztec races, which places them in a grade of civilization far above that of communistic Indian tribes of which we have any record. More than all, the manuscript of Bishop Landa, an eye witness of expiring Mayan civilization, with its detailed account of the political and social relations of the Indians of that country, is strong testimony to the correctness of the generally accepted theories regarding their social and political systems. The truthfulness of Bishop Landa's account is attested by its conformity to other accounts, and to the customs and usages of the Yucatan Indians of to-day, as described by recent travellers. We are obliged to consider the argument of Mr. Morgan insufficient to destroy the common opinions of three centuries and a half, in so far as relates to the Maya Indians.

Mr. Morgan also says that "the Aztecs had no structures comparable with those of Yucatan." If the only grounds for this statement are, that almost no ruins now remain in that country, and that the early accounts of Spanish writers, of what they themselves saw, are considered, by him, untrustworthy, the weight of probability seems, to the writer of this paper, on the contrary, to lie in quite the other direction. When Cortez left Havana, in 1519, he visited Cozumel, famous for its beautiful temples, and Centla, and certain other towns in Central America, on his way to Mexico. Having thus seen the wonderful structures of Central America, is it not strange, that the historians of that expedition, and Cortez himself, should be filled with wonder and amazement at what they found in Mexico, to a degree that disposed them to give a much more particular account of the Aztec palaces than of Yucatan buildings, if they were inferior to them in point of architecture? Mexico has since that time been more populous than Yucatan, and its ruins have naturally disappeared more rapidly in the construction of modern buildings; but the records of its former civilization exist in the accounts of the discoverers, and in the numerous relics of antiquity contained in the museums of Mexico, and scattered about in the archæological collections of Europe and America. The celebrated calendar stone found buried in the *Plaza Mayor* of Mexico, and now preserved in that city, demonstrates the astronomical advancement of the Aztecs in an incontrovertible manner, and that monument alone would establish their advanced position.

The observations and conclusions of a traveller and archæologist of large experience, as to the condition of Central America at the time of its discovery and settlement by the

Spaniards, are contained in the valuable monograph of Dr. C. Hermann Berendt, the discoverer of the site of ancient Centla, who having made a special study of the antiquities of that country in five expeditions, each of several years duration, is entitled to special consideration as one who knows whereof he speaketh.* This writer, while he concedes the insufficiency of consulting the records of Spanish writers alone, thinks that archæology and linguistics will at length furnish us the means of reading these records with positive results, as well as help us to a better understanding of the early history of this continent. He says "Central America was once the centre, or rather the only theatre of a truly American, that is to say, indigenous, development and civilization. It was suggested by Humboldt half a century ago, that more light on this subject is likely to be elicited, through the examination and comparison of what palpably remains of the ancient nations, than from dubious traditions, or a still more precarious speculation. And such palpable remains we have, in their antiquities and in their languages. Thus linguistic science has begun to invade the field of American ethnology: and let it not be forgotten that this science is as little bound, as it is qualified, to perform the whole task alone: archæology must lend a helping hand. We must have museums, in which the plastic remains of the ancient American civilizations, either original, or in faithful imitations, shall, in as large numbers as possible, be collected, and duly grouped and labelled, according to the place and circumstances of their discovery."

* Remarks on the centres of ancient civilization in Central America, and their geographical distribution. Address before the American Geographical Society, by Dr. C. Hermann Berendt. New York, 1876.

The plan for the study of Mayan and Central American ethnology, as indicated by Dr. Berendt, seems to agree most fully with the views entertained by some of the later writers in the publications of the Société Américaine de France, and may be thus stated in brief. *First*, The Study of Native Languages. *Second*, The Study of the Antiquities themselves. *Third*, The formation of Museums, where materials for archæological research may be brought together, and made accessible and available. From the study of aboriginal American history in this practical way, the most satisfactory results can not fail to be reached.

In this brief hour, it would be impossible to describe and elucidate this interesting subject, if the ability were not wanting; but it may be accepted as a welcome service, that draws the attention of this Society to an important field, which the Société Américaine de France, and other European archæologists, are regarding with increased interest.

DR. LE PLONGEON IN YUCATAN.

HIS ACCOUNT OF DISCOVERIES.

DR. LE PLONGEON IN YUCATAN.

THE DISCOVERY OF A STATUE CALLED CHAC-MOOL, AND THE COMMUNICATIONS OF DR. AUGUSTUS LE PLONGEON CONCERNING EXPLORATIONS IN THE YUCATAN PENINSULA.

[Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, April 25, 1877.]

THE most perfect remains of a high degree of early civilization on this continent are to be found in ruins in the central portions of America. Proofs of the extraordinary advancement of the inhabitants of those regions, in architecture and art, at an early period, are not derived alone or principally from the accounts of Spanish voyagers and chroniclers, which agree substantially in the statements of their observations, but much more from the well-preserved ruins of numerous beautiful buildings, constructed of stone, many of them ornamented with bas-reliefs and hieroglyphics. In Mexico, about which Spanish historians of the time of Cortez and after, have written with more particularity, the vestiges of the civilization of the 16th or previous centuries have, in a great measure, been obliterated by the more complete and destructive subjugation suffered at the hands of the conquerors, and by the continuous occupation of the acquired provinces. Probably the early constructions of the Mexicans were not generally composed of so durable materials as those of the neighboring peninsula. Without discussing this point, the fact remains that Yucatan, together with much of the territory of Guatemala, Chiapas, and Tabasco, is strewn with ruins of a character which command the admiration and challenge the investigation of antiquaries. Waldeck, Stephens, Charnay, and

Brasseur de Bourbourg, have brought these wonders of an extinct civilization to the knowledge of the world. Since their investigations have ceased, and until recently, but little has been done in this field. In 1873, however, Dr. Augustus Le Plongeon, a native of the island of Jersey, of French parentage, together with his wife, Mrs. Alice Dixon Le Plongeon, an English lady, attracted by the wealth of opportunity offered to them for archæological study in Yucatan, visited that country, and have been and are still actively engaged in exploring its ruins, photographing and taking plans of the buildings, and in making excavations, which have resulted in securing to the scientific world, a masterpiece of antique sculpture differing essentially from all specimens known to exist of American aboriginal art.

Dr. Le Plongeon is an enthusiast in his chosen career, that of an archæologist and an explorer. Without the energy and strong imagination he has displayed, he would not, alone and unassisted, have braved the dangers and privations of a prolonged residence in the wilds, surrounded by perils from exposure to a tropical climate, and from the dangerous proximity of hostile savages. All that can be learned of the life of this investigator is, that he was educated at Paris, and in 1849 went to California as an engineer, and there laid out the town of Marysville. Then he visited Peru, and travelled with Mr. Squire and took photographs of ruins. He came to New York in 1871, with three valuable paintings, which he had procured in Peru, two of them said to be Murillo's, and the other the work of Juan del Castillo, Murillo's first master. A long account of these pictures appears in the "New York Evening Mail" of March 2, 1871. He took them to England in the same year, and is said to have sold them to the British Museum. Since his residence in Yucatan, both the Doctor and Mrs. Le Plongeon have been engaged in archæological studies and explorations among the ruins of Chichen-Itza, Uxmal, and Aké, and

they have also visited other ruins in the eastern part of Yucatan, together with those of the once famous islands of Cozumel and Mugeres, and have there pursued the same system of investigation. They are at present at Belize, British Honduras, where this explorer is awaiting a reply to his appeal, as an American citizen, to our Minister at Mexico for redress for the loss of the statue which he had discovered, and which has been removed by the government to Mexico, without his knowledge or consent, to be there placed in the National Museum. The writer is in possession of many of Dr. Le Plongeon's letters and communications, all of them in English, and very interesting to antiquarian students. It is regretted that the shortness of time since receiving the more important of these documents will prevent doing justice to the very elaborate and extended material which is at hand; but it is with the hope that interest and coöperation may be awakened in Dr. Le Plongeon and his labors, that this crude and unsatisfactory statement, and imperfect and hasty reference to his letters, is presented.

The conspicuous results of Dr. Le Plongeon's active and successful labors in the archæological field, about which there can be no controversy, are the wonderful statue which he has disinterred at Chichen-Itza, and a series of 137 photographic views of Yucatan ruins, sculptures and hieroglyphics. All of the photographs are similar to those which appear in heliotype, diminished in size, as illustrations of this paper. They consist of portraits of Dr. Le Plongeon and of his wife; 8 photographs of specimen sculpture—among them pictures of men with long beards; 7 photographs of the ruins of Aké, showing the arrangement of so-called *Katuns*—the Maya method of chronology; 12 photographs of Yucatan Indians; 60 photographs of the ruins of Uxmal; and 48 photographs of the ruins of Chichen-Itza, including twelve views relating to the discovery of a statue called Chac-Mool. These pictures,

and the relics found in the excavation from which the statue was exhumed, as well as the discovered statue, are valuable acquisitions, and establish a strong claim to the gratitude of the scientific world. Besides these articles, the original head and feet of a female idol in plaster, from the Island of Mugeres, have been discovered by Dr. Le Plongeon, which have not yet been brought to public notice. Of this antique figure Dr. Le Plongeon says, in a letter to the writer: "Whilst at Mugeres Island I had the good fortune to find the statue of one of the priestesses of the shrine of the Maya Venus, whose ruins stand at the southernmost end of the island, on the very brink of the cliff. It was entire, but the men, not knowing how to handle this object, when first disinterred broke it to pieces. I was only able to save the face and feet. They are full of interest, not only artistically speaking, but also historically, inasmuch as they seem to prove the ancient relations that existed between the people of Mayapan and the inhabitants of the west coast of Africa. The teeth, like those of Chac-Mool, are filed like a saw. This was the custom among persons of high rank in Mayapan, as it is even to-day with some of the African tribes, whilst the sandals are exact representations of those found on the feet of the *Guanches*, the early inhabitants of the Canary Islands, whose mummies are yet occasionally met with in the caves of Teneriffe and the other isles of the group. These relics, I am certain, are the last of high art to be found on the Island of Mugeres. The sea is fast eating the base of the promontory where stands the shrine. Part of it has already fallen into the sea, and in a few years not a stone will remain to indicate the place where stood this altar."

The photographs relating to the discovery of the statute of Chac-Mool are found in a series of twelve pictures, herewith presented in the plates which follow. It is upon this discovery, as will be seen from his *Mexican Memorial*, that Dr. Le Plongeon has relied more than upon any other

result of his labors, for fame and remuneration. The statue was exhumed, according to the account in the *Mexican Memorial*, in consequence of interpretations of certain mural tablets and hieroglyphics, which the discoverer and his able coadjutor, Mrs. Le Plongeon, found in the building shown in the pictures 1 and 2 on the opposite page, upon the south-east wall of the so-called Gymnasium,* which Dr. Le Plongeon says was erected by the queen of Itza, to the memory of Chac-Mool, her husband. As may be seen from a careful inspection of the picture, the stone building is decorated by a belt of tigers, with an ornament separating them, which may have been the "totem."

The exact spot whence this statue was exhumed cannot be certainly stated, though among the plates which represent the discovery are two which may reasonably be supposed to

---

DESCRIPTION OF PLATE.

1 Represents the building at the southern extremity of the eastern wall of the so-called Gymnasium described by Stephens—Travels in Yucatan, vol. II., page 308. It is supposed by Dr. Le Plongeon to have been a monument to the chieftain Chac-Mool.

2. This picture shows the upper portion of the same edifice, in which were found "the mural paintings, bas-reliefs and other signs," which gave a clue to the discovery of the statue.

3 Shows probably the locality where the statue was excavated. The same sculptured slabs that appear in picture 8 in the foreground on the right, are seen resting against a mound, in their supposed original position, and serve to indicate the identity of the localities. In the rear of the slabs is probably the heap of stones forming the pedestal for the stone figure of a tiger spoken of in the "*Mexican Memorial.*"

4. This is probably another view in the immediate neighborhood. Among the scattered debris is the sculptured head of a serpent, with open jaws.

5 Represents the sculptured slabs, which are seen also in pictures 3, 6 and 8. They are of unequal width, but the length and thickness was probably the same in each.

6. Another view of the sculptured slabs. The first shows a bird of prey; this is apparently a tiger. Both of them hold in their grasp objects of a similar character.

NOTE. Several of these pictures are described in the *Mexican Memorial*, but are there differently numbered.

---

* Stephens' Travels in Yucatan, Vol. II., page 308.

Electrotype Printing Company. Boston

Sculptured Building at Chichen-Itza, Yucatan, and the external appearance of the place whence the Statue was exhumed by Dr. Augustus LePlongeon.

[illegible] for fame and reputation. The [illegible] according to the account [illegible] the [illegible] consequence of interpretations of [illegible] hieroglyphics, which they discovered [illegible]. Mrs. Le Plongeon, found in the [illegible] pictures 1 and 2 on the opposite [illegible] east wall of the [illegible] Gymnasium. Mrs. Le Plongeon says was erected [illegible] memory of Chac Mool, her [illegible] careful investigation of the [illegible] decorated with a belt of [illegible], [illegible] them, which may have been

[illegible] this statue [illegible] exhibited [illegible] be [illegible] among [illegible] which represent [illegible] which [illegible] reasonably [illegible] supposed to

---

DESCRIPTION OF PLATE.

[illegible] the building [illegible] extremity [illegible] western wall of [illegible] Stephens' Yucatan, Vol. II., [illegible] by Dr. [illegible] not to have been a monument to the

[illegible] shows the [illegible] section of the same edifice, in which were [illegible] paintings, [illegible] and other [illegible] which gave a clue to [illegible] the statue.

[illegible] probably the [illegible] where the statue was excavated. The same [illegible] slabs that appear [illegible] figure 8 in the [illegible] on the right, and [illegible] against a [illegible] supposed [illegible] a, and serve [illegible] the identity of [illegible] is probably [illegible] of stones forming [illegible] of the stone [illegible] of a tiger spoken [illegible] the "*Mexican Memorial*."

4. This is probably another view in the immediate neighborhood [illegible] the scattered debris is the [illegible] and head of [illegible]

5 Represents the sculptured slabs, which [illegible] They are of unequal width, but the length and [illegible] was probably the same in each.

6 Another view of the sculptured slabs. The [illegible] shows a [illegible] this is [illegible]. Both of them [illegible] in their grasp [illegible]

Similar [illegible] these pictures are described in the *Mexican* [illegible] have been [illegible] numbered.

---

* Stephens' Travels in Yucatan, Vol. II., page 303.

Heliotype Printing Company. *Boston.*

Decorated Building at Chichen-Itza, Yucatan, and the external appearance of the place whence the Statue was exhumed by Dr. Augustus LePlongeon.

exhibit the locality. One of these pictures shows the sculptured slabs which may have decorated the mound where the excavation was made, and which again appear on the side of the opening through which the statue is seen emerging. The slabs are elaborately wrought, and represent, the one a tiger holding something in his paw, and the other a bird of prey, with talons similarly employed.

During the early portion of his residence and explorations at Chichen-Itza, Dr. Le Plongeon was assisted by Government troops, who acted as a guard against hostile Indians—*sublivados**—as these ruins lie outside the limits of territory considered safe for occupation; and though this protection was soon withdrawn, and the discoverer was obliged to rely solely upon arms furnished to his laborers, still he was not disheartened by the dangers of his undertaking, nor dissuaded by the appeals of his friends from persevering in his labors.

The first object discovered at this place, as will be learned from the *Mexican Memorial*, was a long stone, half interred among the others, which proved to be the base of a sculp-

* The hostile Indians *(sublivados)* so often spoken of by Dr. Le Plongeon in his communications, are a body of revolted natives, variously estimated at from 50,000 to 140,000. They are called Indians of *Chan-Santa-Cruz*, from the name of their chief town, in the south-eastern part of the peninsula. During political troubles in 1847, a formidable rising of Indians against the whites took place in Yucatan, which has not yet been subdued. Nearly every year the frontier towns and plantations bordering upon the territory of these rebels, suffer from their attacks; their inhabitants are slain and their property is destroyed. So formidable is this enemy that at one time their soldiers, said to be supplied with English arms, advanced to within 15 miles of the city of Mérida. As matters stand to-day, about two-fifths of the territory of the state is in their power, and a large number of the best plantations in the peninsula are deserted.

A friend, Sr. Dn. Andres Aznar Pérez, of Mérida, a gentleman of large public spirit and much knowledge of this subject, informs the writer that "the principal Indian leaders in the revolution of 1847, were the cruel Cicilio Chi', and Jacinto Pat, the latter assassinated for his sympathy with the whites. Crecencio Poot (spoken of by Dr. Le Plongeon), is one

tured reclining tiger, of much the same size, proportions and execution as the statue of Chac-Mool, as is apparent from a photograph of the tiger in the general collection. The head, of human form, which was wanting, was afterwards found at some distance, in a pile of carved stones. The next objects that appeared were the bas-reliefs, presumably those pictured in 3, 5, 6 and 8. The mound of stones where the excavation was made was, according to Dr. Le Plongeon, the pedestal that supported the effigy of the tiger. Work was commenced at the top of the heap of stones, which were rudely thrown together, rendering the labor difficult and dangerous. An excavation was made measuring 7 meters in depth, which was protected by a trestle-work, and at this depth a rough calcareous stone urn was secured which contained a little dust, and upon it a coarse earthen cover. This was near the head of the statue, which then appeared. The work of liberating the statue required a deepening of the trench 1½ meters more. A picture in heliotype copied from a series of six photographs, showing the various positions assumed by the figure during the process of excavation, can be consulted upon the second page following. This work of art was raised by Dr. Le Plongeon, with the assistance of his wife and ten

---

of their later leaders. I am well convinced that the revolt of our Indians will never be brought to an end by force, as has been thus far pretended. I call this unfortunate race noble, and well it deserves the title if we follow dispassionately the sufferings it has had to endure from the remote times of the conquest until the present, with habits so moderate, so frugal, so mild, that only the inhuman treatment of civil as well as religious authorities has been able to exasperate them. Theirs have been always the sufferings, the labors—never the enjoyments—that accompany enlightenment and healthy morality." An extended and unprejudiced account of this rebellion has just been published at Mérida, called "*Historia de las Revoluciones de Yucatan*," by Sr. D. Serapio Baqueiro, in two volumes, which covers a period from 1840 to 1864. For years a constant military surveillance of the main avenues of approach from the eastern and south-eastern sections of the state has been maintained at a great expense to the government without affording adequate protection against periodical hostile incursions.

Indian laborers, by his own ingenuity, and without other engineering apparatus than he had contrived from the trees and vines, making use also of the bark, from which he constructed ropes. Dr. Le Plongeon, in a private letter to the writer, says, "The statue is carved out of a single block of beautifully white and homogeneous limestone. It is naked, and the peculiar ornament suspended by a ribbon tied on the back of the neck, that is seen on the chest, is the distinctive mark of high rank. This same ornament is seen on the chests of all the personages who were entitled to carry three feathers on their heads. The band that composes the head-dress was formed of pieces of an octagonal shape, joined together, and is fastened by ribbons also on the back of the head. The figure had bracelets and garters of feathers, and the sandals, quite different from those used by the present inhabitants of the country, were tied to the feet and legs, and resemble those found on the mummies of the *Guanches*, the ancient inhabitants of the Canary Islands. There were no ear laps, but square tablets appear in place of the ears, on which are hieroglyphics giving the name, condition, &c., &c., of the personage represented by the statue. It is not an idol, but a true portrait of a man who has lived an earthly life. I have seen him represented in battle, in councils, and in court receptions. I am well acquainted with his life, and the manner of his death. The scientific world owes much to Mrs. Le Plongeon for the restoration of the mural paintings where his history and the customs of his people are portrayed; and where Stephens has been unable to see more than a few figures, she has discovered the history of a people and of their leaders."

"The name, Chac Mool, or Balam, and the names of his two brothers, *Huuncay* and *Aac*, the latter the builder of the 'House of the Governor' at Uxmal, are not given by us at random. They are written on the monuments where

represented, written in characters just as intelligible to my wife and myself, as this paper is to you in latin letters. Every person represented on these monuments is known to us by name, since either over the head or at the feet, the name is written. We have tracings of the mural paintings as seen on the walls of the inner chamber of the monument raised by the queen of Itza to the memory of her husband, Chac-Mool. Stephens mistook it for a shrine where the winners at the games of ball were wont to make offerings to the presiding idol. In your paper you have copied part of his description of that monument. But the statue of Chac-Mool was not exhumed in it as you assert, but four hundred yards from it, in the midst of the forest. No traveller or writer has ever indicated the place where it lay buried, and it is by deciphering the meaning of some

---

DESCRIPTION OF PLATE.

7 Represents the statue of Chac-Mool uncovered at the depth of 8 meters. At the sides are seen the frame-work "of trunks of trees of 2 to 2½ inches in diameter, secured with vines." The inclined plane on which it was drawn to the surface is visible, as are some of the ten Indian laborers, in working costume.

8. The statue has now been drawn to the upper part of the inclined plane. The ropes of habin bark are attached to the figure. Near the sculptured slabs at the right, already shown in 3, 5 and 6, Mrs. Le Plongeon appears seated.

9 Shows the capstan that served to raise the statue, the size of which is apparent by comparison with the figure of the Indian near it.

10 Apparently the same locality as 4. The method of moving the statue over the fragments of sculpture and other impediments is shown.

11. The size and appearance of the statue, "half as large again as the natural size," is here distinctly pictured, together with Dr. Le Plongeon standing in the rear of his discovery. The head-dress, trappings and sandals are clearly defined.

12. The statue is seen on the rude wagon on which it had been transported to Pisté, a distance of 3 or 4 miles. In the rear is seen the stone church of Pisté, surmounted by a cross, described in *Charnay's Cités et Ruines Américaines*, page 336, and by Dr. Le Plongeon, in the *Mexican Memorial*. Nearly all the small towns have similar Churches, built from the ruins of Indian buildings. It is probable that some of the choicest works of art, too large to be easily destroyed, were put out of sight in the construction of these edifices by the fanatical conquerors of the 16th century.

NOTE. The numbers of the pictures do not agree with those in the *Mexican Memorial*.

Statue at Chichen Itza, Yucatan, in p
t j
it was

[illegible] written in characters just as intelligible to my wife and myself, as this paper is to you in latin letters. Every person represented on these monuments is known to us by name, since over the head or at the feet, the name is written [illegible] tracings of the mural paintings as seen on the [illegible] inner chamber of the monument raised by the [illegible] of Itza to the memory of her husband, Chac-Mool. Stephens mistook it for a shrine where the women of the games of ball were wont to make offerings to the presiding idol. In your paper you have copied part [illegible] description of that monument. But the statue of Chac-Mool was not exhumed in it as you assert, but four [illegible] yards from [illegible] the midst of the forest. No traveller or writer has ever indicated the place where it is located, and it [illegible] deciphering the meaning of some

---

DESCRIPTION OF PLATE.

1. Represents [illegible] of Chac-Mool [illegible] covered at the depth [illegible] 8 meters. At the sides [illegible] the frame-work [illegible] trunks of trees of [illegible] 24 inches in diameter, [illegible] vines." The inclined plane on which [illegible] was drawn [illegible] the surface [illegible] as are some [illegible] ten Indian laborers, in working costume.

2. [illegible] as now been drawn [illegible] upper part [illegible] inclined [illegible] The [illegible] on back are attached [illegible] the figure. [illegible] the sculptured [illegible] are [illegible] only shown in 3. Mrs. Le Plongeon appears [illegible] the [illegible] stan that serves [illegible] the size [illegible] the size of [illegible] n is apparent [illegible] arison with the [illegible] The Indian wear it.

3. [illegible] only the same [illegible] The method of moving [illegible] statue over [illegible] nts of sculpture [illegible] impediments is shown.

4. [illegible] e size and appear[illegible] the statue [illegible] half as large as [illegible] s the natural [illegible] s here distinctly; [illegible] together with Dr. Le Plongeon [illegible] unding [illegible] of his discoveries [illegible] head-dress, trappings and [illegible] ais are [illegible] ed.

5. The statue is [illegible] on the ruined [illegible] on which it [illegible] [illegible] seen a distance [illegible] 4 miles. In the rear is seen [illegible] church of Pisté described in *Charnay's* [illegible] *as Anciennes* page 385 [illegible] Le Plongeon, in the *Mexican* [illegible] *Vol.* Nearly all the [illegible] modern Churches, built from [illegible] of Indian buildings is [illegible] one of the choicest [illegible] art, too large to be easily put out of sight in the [illegible] construction of these edifices by [illegible] tors of the 16th century.

[illegible] numbers of the pictures [illegible] not agree with those in the *M*

Heliotype Printing Company. *Boston.*

Statue at Chichen-Itza, Yucatan, in process of exhumation by Dr. Augustus LePlongeon, showing the engineering process by which it was accomplished.

hieroglyphics and mural paintings, that we came to a knowledge of the place. The building with tigers and shields was simply a monument dedicated to his memory."

It appears that Dr. Le Plongeon, on his arrival in Yucatan, in 1873, first visited Uxmal, where he made explorations and took photographs. He then prepared himself to undertake the more difficult and dangerous visit to Chichen-Itza. While there, the discovery of the statue, Chac-Mool, was made, and it was excavated in the manner described by the discoverer in the last pages of the *Mexican Memorial.* Dr. Le Plongeon had formed a design of sending the statue and certain bas-reliefs, together with plans and photographs, to the Centennial Exhibition, and had prepared these articles for removal, when a sudden revolution occasioned the disarming of his Indian laborers, who for some time had served for a protection, and all further operations were suspended, as longer residence in that exposed region without arms was sheer madness. It was at that time that Dr. Le Plongeon wrote the following Memorial to the Mexican President, Senor Don Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada, which is given nearly entire, as it makes a statement of his claims and wishes, and contains very important information concerning the discovery of the statue, and gives an idea of his method of exploration.

The account here given of experiences resulting in a discovery so surprising, must interest even those sceptical in regard to the progress in art of the American aborigines; and it must also be remembered that, almost without exception, late as well as early travellers in this region have become enthusiastic and imaginative when brought into contact with these monuments of a measureless past,*—

*This idea was better expressed by our learned associate, Mr. Haven, in Proceedings of this Society, No. 55, page 56, in commenting upon the works of Brasseur de Bourbourg.

none of them more so, perhaps, than Brasseur de Bourbourg, whose works nevertheless contain a mine of most valuable information aside from hypotheses.

Accompanying the Memorial, a set of photographs, some of them similar to those copied in heliotype, was sent to Mexico for the information of the President, but the numbers in the last pages of that paper, referring to the special set of photographs, do not correspond to the pictures presented here, as there were no means of verifying the subjects, except from the descriptions.

NOTE.—It will be observed that Dr. Le Plongeon's spelling of the word *Chac-Mool*, differs from that adopted by the writer in deference to prevailing usage in Yucatan. The discoverer always spells the word *Chaacmol*, although in the long letter to the writer, on the subject of Maya antiquities, introduced at the close of this paper, the more usual spelling has been adopted by the printer, contrary to the text of Dr. Le Plongeon.

MEMORIAL PRESENTED TO THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT, AND AFTERWARDS PUBLISHED IN THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF YUCATAN, APRIL 19 AND 21, 1876.

To the President of the Mexican Republic,

SENOR DON SEBASTIAN LERDO DE TEJADA.

Sir:

I, AUGUSTUS LE PLONGEON, Doctor in Medicine, member of the Academy of Sciences of the State of California, of the Microscopical Society of San Francisco, of the Philological Society of New York, corresponding member of the Geographical and Statistical Society of Mexico; and of various other scientific societies of Europe, of the United States of America, and of South America; citizen of the United States of America; resident at present in Mérida, Capital of the State of Yucatan, to you, with due respect, say: Since the year 1861 I am dedicated to the iconology of American antiquities, with the object of publishing a work that may make known to the world the precious archæological treasures that the regions of the so-called new world enclose, nearly unknown to the wise men of Europe, and even to those of America itself, and thus follow the perigrinations of the human race upon the planet that we inhabit.

With so important an object, I visited the different countries of the American Continent, where I could gather the necessary information to carry through my work, already commenced, and in part

published, "The Vestiges of the human race in the American Continent since the most remote times."

The New York Tribune published part of my discourse before the Geographical Society of New York, on the "Vestiges of Antiquity," in its Lecture Sheet No. 8 of 1873.

After traversing the Peruvian Andes, the Glaciers of Bolivia, and the Deserts of the North and North-East part of the Mexican Republic, in search of the dwellings of their primitive inhabitants, I resolved to visit Yucatan, in order to examine at leisure the imposing ruins that cover its soil, and whose imperfect descriptions I had read in Stephens, Waldeck, Charnay, Brasseur de Bourbourg, and others.

The atmospheric action, the inclemencies of the weather, and more than all, the exuberant vegetation, aided by the impious and destructive hand of ignorant iconoclasts, have destroyed and destroy incessantly these *opera magna* of an enlightened and civilized generation that passed from the theatre of the world some twelve thousand years ago, if the stones, in their eloquent muteness, do not deceive. And unless the few treasures that yet remain, in a state of more or less perfect preservation, be gathered and saved, they will before long disappear completely, and with them the last traces of the high civilization, the artistic and scientific culture attained by the architects and other artists that worked and raised them, under the protection of enlightened potentates, lovers of all that was grand, and of everything that could glorify their country.

The results of my investigations, although made in territories forbidden to the whites, and even to pacific Indians obedient to Mexican authority; surrounded by constant dangers, amid forests, where, besides the wild beasts, the fierce Indians of Chan-Santa-Cruz lay in ambush for me; suffering the pangs of hunger, in company with my young wife Alice Dixon Le Plongeon, have surpassed my most flattering hopes. To-day I can assert, without boasting, that the discoveries of my wife and myself place us in advance of the travellers and archæologists who have occupied themselves with American antiquities.

Returning however to civilization with the hope of making known to the scientific world the fruit of our labors, I am sorry to find myself detained by prohibitive laws that I was ignorant of, and which prevent me from presenting the unmistakable proofs of the high civilization and the grandeur, of ancient America; of this old Continent of Professor Agassiz and other modern geologists and archæologists.

These laws, sanctioned by an exclusive and retrogressive government, have not been revoked up to the present time by the enlightened, progressive and wise government that rules the destinies of the Mexican Republic, and they are a barrier that henceforth will impede the investigation of scientific men, among the ruins of Yucatan and Mexico. It is in effect a strange fact, that while autocratic governments, like those of Turkey, Greece, and Persia, do not interpose difficulties—that

of Turkey to Dr. Henry Schliemann, after discovering the site of the celebrated Troy and the treasures of King Priam, to his carrying his *findings* and presenting them to the civilized world; that of Greece to General Cesnola's disposing in New York of his collection of Phœnician antiquities (the only one in the world), found in the tombs of the Island of Cyprus. Nor did even that of Persia think of preventing Mr. George Smith, after he had disinterred from among the ruins of Nineveh, the year before last, the libraries of the kings of Assyria, from carrying the precious volumes to the British Museum, where they are to be found to-day. I alone, a free citizen of a Republic, the friend of Mexico, after spending my fortune and time, see myself obliged to abandon, in the midst of the forests, the best and most perfect works of art of the sculptor, up to the present time known in America, because the government of this Nation reclaims as its own, objects found in the midst of forests, at great depths below the surface of the earth, and of whose existence it was not only ignorant, but was even unsuspicious.

The photographs of these objects, and of the places where they were found, are all that, with plans, and tracings of most interesting mural paintings, I can now present: and that after so many expenses, cares, and dangers, unless you, Mr. President, considering the historical importance of my discoveries and works, as an illustrious man, a lover of progress, and the glory of his country, in the name of the nation authorize me to carry my *findings* and photographs, plans and tracings, to that great concourse of all nations to which America has just invited every people of the earth, and which will be opened shortly in Philadelphia; and with them the material proofs of my assertion that America is the cradle of the actual civilization of the world.

Leaving New York on the 29th of July, 1873, we, Mrs. Le Plongeon and myself, arrived, on the 6th of August, at Progreso. We remained in Mérida from that date, studying the customs of the country, acquiring friends, and preparing to fulfil the mission that had brought us to Yucatan, (viz: the study of its ruins), until the 6th of November, 1874. At that epoch the epidemic of small-pox, that has made such ravages in Mérida, and is yet active in the interior villages of the Peninsula, began to develop itself. Senor D. Liborio Irigoyen, then Governor, knowing that I was about to visit the towns of the east, to seek among their inhabitants the traditions of the past, if they yet existed, or at least among their customs some of those of the primitive dwellers of those lands, begged me to scatter among them the vaccine, to ward off, as much as possible, the terrible scourge that threatened them. I accepted the commission, and to the best of my power I have complied with it, without any remuneration whatever. After examining the principal cities of the east of the State—Tunkas, Cenotillo, Espita and Tizimin—gathering notes upon their commerce, the occupations of their inhabitants, the productions of the places, etc., etc., remaining in them more or less time, we finally arrived at Valladolid on

the 20th of May, 1875. This city, that was at one time among the most important of the State, is seen to-day almost reduced to ruins by the invasions of the Indians of Chan-Santa-Cruz. It is situated on the frontier of the enemy's country, some twelve leagues from the celebrated ruins of Chichen-Itza—the objective point of my jonrney to these regions. During my perigrinations through the east, I had, more than once, opportunity to observe the profound terror that the inhabitants, as well *mestizos* and Indians as the whites, have, not without reason, of their fierce neighbors.

In view of the dangers that awaited us, I thought proper to write to my good friend, General Don Guillermo Palomino, sub-inspector of the military posts of Yucatan; so that, without prejudice to the service, he should give orders to the commander of the post of Pisté, distant one league from the ruins of Chichen, to succor us in case we should need his aid.

General Palomino, understanding the importance of my undertaking, interested himself in the result. He wrote to Don Filipe Diaz, chief of the military line of the east, so that he should give orders to his subaltern, the commander of the advance-post of Pisté, that in case of necessity he should furnish my wife and myself the protection we might need while in Chichen.

After many delays, owing now to one thing, now to another, but more particularly to the alarming reports that the Indians, or at least their emissaries and spies, prowled about the neighborhood, we at last started on the march in the direction of Pisté on the 21st of September, 1875.

Colonel Diaz was about to visit the posts under his command. This gentleman, as much to respect the orders of his superior as to give me a proof of his appreciation of my person, resolved to accompany us to Chichen with part of his forces. He did so, leaving Valladolid protected by a company of his battalion, and another of the 18th regiment of the line which at the time was stationed in that city. Arrived at the village of Oitas, we learned that the old footpath, the only one that had ever existed between this point and Pisté, four leagues distant, was entirely closed up, impassable, consequently, for horsemen.

Colonel Don José Coronado, who, from esteem, had also wished to accompany us, offered to go forward with a part of the company, and some Indians, to re-open the road, and make it ready. His offer accepted, he departed, and a few days later we were able to continue our march to Pisté, not meeting in the transit other annoyance than the roughness of the road, the roots and tree trunks that had obstructed it having been removed.

So, on the 27th of September, after a tedious march of six hours in the thicket, we reached the advance-post of Pisté.

Pisté, ten years ago, was a pretty village, built amid forests, around a senote of thermal waters, surrounded by most fertile lands, which the industrious dwellers cultivated. Suddenly, on a certain Sunday (elec-

tion day), when they were entertained at the polls, the ominous war-cry of the Indians of Chan-Santa-Cruz fell upon their ears. Few were the villagers that, taking refuge in the bush, escaped the terrible *machete* of their enemies. Of this village only the name remains. Its houses roofless, their walls crumbled, are scarcely seen beneath the thick green carpet of convolvulus, and cowage (mecuna). These overspread them with their leaves and beautiful petals, as if to hide the blood that once stained them, and cause to be forgotten the scenes of butchery they witnessed. The church alone, sad and melancholy, without doors, its sanctuaries silent, its floor paved with the burial slabs of the victims, surrounded by parapets, yet stands in the midst of the ruined abodes of those who used to gather under its roof; it is to-day converted into a fortress. The few soldiers of the post are the only human beings that inhabit these deserts for many leagues around; its old walls, its belfry, widowed of its bells, are all that indicates to the traveller that Pisté once was there.

After resting, we continued our march to Chichen, whose grand pyramid of 22 meters 50 centimeters high, with its nine *andenes*, could be seen from afar amidst the sea of vegetation that surrounded it, as a solitary lighthouse in the midst of the ocean. Night had already fallen when we reached the *Casa principal* of the *hacienda of Chichen*, that Colonel Coronado had had cleaned to receive us.

At dawn on the following day, 28th, Colonel Diaz caused parapets to be raised and the house to be fortified. He placed his advance sentinels and made all necessary arrangements to avoid a surprise from the Indians, and to resist them in case of attack. For my part I immediately commenced work. From the descriptions made by the travellers who had preceded me and that I had read, I believed fifteen days or three weeks would be sufficient for me to investigate all the ruins. But on the 12th of October, Colonel Diaz having received notice that the Indians were probably preparing an attack, sent to bring me from the ruins, to communicate to me the news that he had to march immediately. I had really scarcely commenced my studies, notwithstanding I had worked every day from sunrise to sunset, so many and so important were the monuments that, very superficially, my predecessors had visited.

I resolved to remain with my wife, and continue our investigations until they should be completed, in spite of the dangers that surrounded us. I made known my unalterable resolution to Colonel Diaz, asking him only to arm a few of the Indians that remained with me, for I did not wish even a single soldier of the post of Pisté to accompany me. Leaving my instruments of geodesy and photography at the ruins, I made the church of Pisté my head-quarters, where we went every night to sleep, returning always at daylight to Chichen, one league distant.

It would be too long to give here the details of my work and investigations. Enough to say, that from the 28th of September, 1875, when I

began to study the monuments, up to the 5th of January, 1876, when, learning of the prohibitive laws I have already mentioned, and that on account of the better requirements of the service I was to disarm my men, I interrupted my works; that is to say, in one hundred days I have made scrupulously exact plans of the principal edifices, discovering that their architects made use, in those remote times, of the metrical measure with its divisions. I have made five hundred stereoscopic views, from which I have selected eighty, equal to those that accompany this writing; I have discovered hieroglyphics which I have caused to reappear intact, and taken photographs of some that are said to be a prophecy of the establishment of the electric telegraph between *Saci* (Valladolid of to-day), and *Ho* (Mérida); I have restored mural paintings of great merit for the drawing, and for the history they reveal; I have taken exact tracings of the same which form a collection of twenty plates, some nearly one meter long; I have discovered bas-reliefs which have nothing to envy in the bas-reliefs of Assyria and Babylon; and, guided by my interpretations of the ornaments, paintings, &c., &c., of the most interesting building in Chichen (historically speaking), I have found amidst the forest, eight meters under the soil, a statue of Chaacmol, of calcareous stone, one meter, fifty-five centimeters long, one meter, fifteen centimeters in height, and eighty centimeters wide, weighing fifty kilos, or more; and this I extracted without other machine than that invented by me, and manufactured from trunks of trees with the *machete* of my Indians. I have opened two leagues of carriage road to carry my findings to civilization; and finally I have built a rustic cart in which to bring the statue to the high road that leads from Oitas to Mérida. This statue, Mr. President, the only one of its kind in the world, shows positively that the ancient inhabitants of America have made, in the arts of drawing and sculpture, advances, equal at least to those made by the Assyrian, Chaldean and Egyptian artists.

I will pause a moment to give you an idea of my works that concern said statue, and soon bring to an end this writing. Guided, as I have just said, by my interpretations of the mural paintings, bas-reliefs, and other signs that I found in the monument raised to the memory of the Chief Chaacmol, by his wife, the Queen of Chichen, by which the stones speak to those who can understand them, I directed my steps, inspired perhaps also by the instinct of the archæologist, to a dense part of the thicket. Only one Indian, Desiderio Kansal, from the neighborhood of Sisal-Valladolid, accompanied me. With his *machete* he opened a path among the weeds, vines and bushes, and I reached the place I sought. It was a shapeless heap of rough stones. Around it were sculptured pieces and bas-reliefs delicately executed. After cutting down the bush, and clearing the spot, it presented the aspect which the plates No. 1 and 2 represent. A long stone, half interred among the others, attracted my attention. Scraping away the earth

from around it, with the *machete* and the hand, the effigy of a reclining tiger soon appeared; plate No. 3 represents it. But the head was wanting. This, of human form, I had the happiness to find, some meters distant, among a pile of other carved stones.

My interpretations had been correct; everything I saw proved it to me. I at once concentrated all my attention at this spot. Hunting among the débris, I came across the bas-reliefs seen in plates 4, 2, and 5, which confirmed my conclusions. This pile of stones had been in times past the pedestal that supported the effigy of the dying tiger with a human head, which the Toltecs had thrown down when they invaded Chichen, at the beginning of the Christian era.

With great exertion, aided by levers, my ten men again put these bas-reliefs in the place they anciently occupied, and which plate No. 1 shows.

Resolved to make an excavation at this spot, I commenced my work at the upper part of the heap. I was not long in comprehending the difficulty of the task. The pedestal, as in all the later monuments which were raised in Chichen, was of loose stones, without mortar, without cement of any kind. For one stone that was removed, a hundred fell. The work was hence extremely dangerous. I possessed no tools, nor machines of any description. I resorted to the *machete* of my Indians, the trees of the forest, and the vines that entwine their trunks. I formed a frame-work to prevent the falling of the stones.

This frame-work appears in plates 6, 7 and 8. It is composed of trunks of trees of two to two-and-a-half inches in diameter, secured with vines. In this way I was able to make an excavation two meters, fifty centimeters square, to a depth of seven meters. I then found a rough sort of urn of calcareous stone; it contained a little dust, and upon it the cover of a coarse earthen pot, painted with yellow ochre. (This cover has since been broken). It was placed near the head of the statue, and the upper part, with the three feathers that adorn it, appeared among loose stones, placed around it with great care. Colonel D. Daniel Traconis, who had that day come to visit, and bring me a few very welcome provisions, was present when it was discovered. I continued the work with precaution, and had the satisfaction, after excavating one-and-a-half meters more, to see the entire statue appear.

Contemplating this admirable specimen of ancient art, seeing the beauty of the carving of its expressive face, I was filled with admiration! Henceforth the American artists could enter into competition with those of Assyria and Egypt! But, on considering its enormous weight, its colossal form (it is half as large again as the natural size), I felt myself overwhelmed with dismay. How to raise it from the profound bed where it had been deposited, five thousand years ago, by its friends and the artificers, who with excessive care raised the pedestal around it! I had no machines, not even ropes. Only ten Indians

accompanied me. The enterprise was difficult; but when man wishes, he conquers difficulties, and smooths all obstacles.

After some sleepless nights (the idea of being unable to present my discoveries to the world did not let me rest), I resolved to open the pedestal on the east side, form an inclined plane, construct a capstan, make ropes with the bark of the *habin* (a tree that grows in these woods), and extract, by these means, my gem from the place where it lay.

Plate 6 represents the opening made, and the inclined plane, the lower part of which only reaches to the shoulder of the statue, which is seen in the bottom of the excavation. Its depth is known by comparing the height of the Indian standing near the statue, and the one who is placed at a third part of the inclined plane.

Plate No 7 represents the statue of Chaacmol at the moment of its arrival at the upper part of the plane on the surface of the earth; the cables of the *habin* bark which served to extract it; the construction of the capstan; and the profundity of the excavation.

Plate No. 8 represents the capstan that served me to raise the statue, the size of which you may know, Sr. President, comparing it with your servant and the Indians who aided at the work. The trunk of a tree, with two hollowed stones, were the fundamental pieces of the machine. These rings of stone were secured to the trunk with vines. Two forked poles, whose extremities rest at each side of the excavation, and the forked sticks tied up to the superior ring embracing it, served as *arc-boutant* in the direction where the greatest force was to be applied. A tree-trunk, with its fork, served as a fulcrum around which was wound the cable of bark. A pole placed in the fork served as lever. It is with the aid of this rustic capstan that my ten men were able to raise the heavy mass to the surface in half an hour.

But my works were not to end there. True, the statue was on the surface of the earth, but it was surrounded by débris, by ponderous stones, and trunks of trees. Its weight was enormous compared with the strength of my few men. These on the other hand worked by halves. They always had the ear attentive to catch the least sound that was perceived in the bush. The people of Crecencio Poot might fall upon us at any moment, and exterminate us. True, we had sentinels, but the forest is thick and immense, and those of Chan-Santa-Cruz make their way through it with great facility.

Open roads there were none, not even to carry the statue of Chaacmol to civilization if I had the means of transport.

Well, then, I had resolved that, cost what it might, the world should know my statue—my statue, that was to establish my fame forever among the scientific circles of the civilized world. I had to carry it, but, alas! I calculated without the prohibitive laws. . . . . .
Sr. President, to-day, with grief I write it, it is buried in the forests, where my wife and myself have concealed it. Perhaps the world will

were accompanied by a letter to the President of the Centennial Commission, recounting the great disappointment of not being able to send the statue, but entreating a careful consideration of the pictures. The letter was dated Mérida, August 30, 1876. By unfortunate delays and misunderstandings, the articles above mentioned never reached their destination, and in March of the present year were purchased by the writer.

The relics are interesting specimens of pottery and of the ornaments or weapons that were found with the statue, whose excavation has been described by the discoverer himself. The Jade Points and Flints are very carefully wrought, and suggest rather the idea of selection as symbols than of ordinary warlike implements. A portion or all of the articles mentioned, together with ashes, were found in a stone urn, and are shown on the opposite page.*

Mérida, the capital of the State of Yucatan, has an insti-

DESCRIPTION OF PLATE.

A picture of the relics found by Dr. Le Plongeon with the statue which he exhumed at Chichen-Itza. They were intended for exhibition at Philadelphia, together with the photographs which have been mentioned, but failed in reaching their destination. It is not supposed that the above were the only or the most valuable of the curiosities found in connection with the statue.

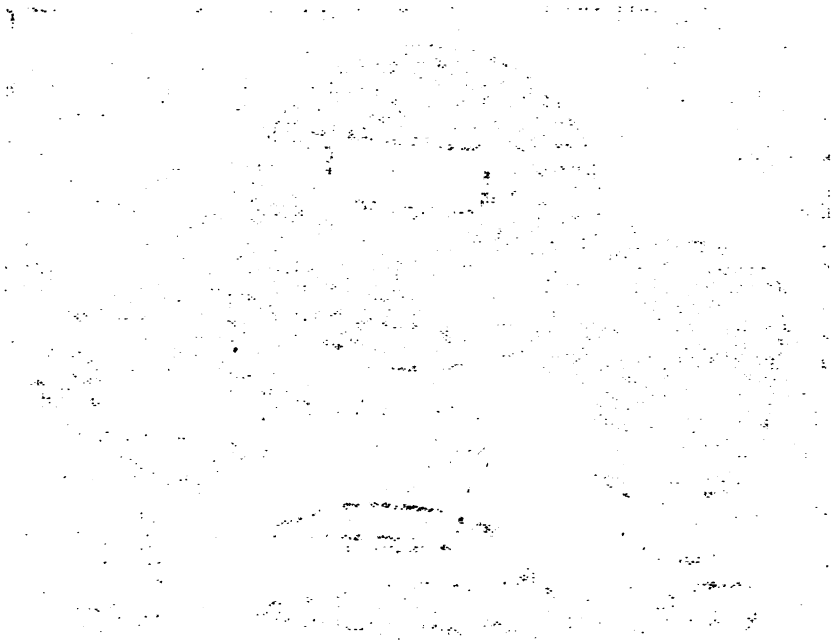
The three pieces of pottery bear the original labels, "*From the Mausoleum of the chieftain Chaac-mol (tiger,) Chichen-Itza. At least 5000 years old. Augustus Le Plongeon, M. D.*" They were found near the head of the statue. The dish on the left stands on three short legs, perforated so that an object might be suspended from it, and the larger dish has similar legs, without perforation. The bowl at the right is decorated with tracings and other embellishments.

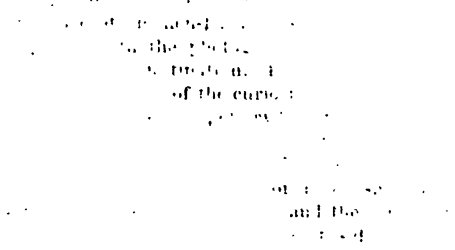
Below are axes and flint spears from the Island of Cozumel. Next follow fossil shells, collected by Mrs. Alice Le Plongeon from an excavation at Chichen-Itza, which may be useful in a scientific point of view.

The Jade Points are beautiful specimens, and may have been used for ceremonial purposes. The arrow-heads are of flint, very carefully finished, and have minute grooves at the base. These also apparently were not intended for practical uses. A portion, or all of the above articles, except the Cozumel flints, were enclosed in the stone urn spoken of by Dr. Le Plongeon in his *Mexican Memorial*.

---

* See Relacion de las Cosas de Yucatan, de Diego de Landa. By L'Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg. Paris, 1864, page 327.





Pottery. Tomb of Chac-Mool. (Tiger Kings) Chichen-Itza
Axes & Flint Spears Cozumel
Fossil Shells. Excavation Chichen-Itza.
Jade Points Tomb of Chac-Mool Chichen-Itza
3 Inches
Arrow Heads Tomb of Chac-Mool Chichen-Itza.

Heliotype Printing Company. *Boston.*

Relics found in the excavation with the Statue exhumed by Dr. Augustus LePlongeon at Chichen-Itza, Yucatan, together with specimens of axes and spear heads from Cozumel.

tution called *El Museo Yucateco*, founded in 1871, under the direction of Sr. Dn. Crecencio Carillo Ancona, and it is now managed by Sr. Dn. Juan Peon Contreras. In its collections are pieces of antique sculpture in stone, plaster casts and pottery taken from ancient graves, manuscripts in the Maya language and in the Spanish, rare imprints and works relating to the peninsula. These, together with objects of natural history and samples of the various woods of the country, and a cabinet of curiosities, form a museum that promises to create and encourage a love of antiquarian research among the people, a labor which has been the province of the Museo Nacional in the city of Mexico. But it does not appear that explorations have as yet been attempted. The connection which this institution has with the statue discovered by Dr. Le Plongeon arises from the fact that in February, 1877, a commission was despatched to the neighborhood of the town of Pisté by the Governor of Yucatan, under the orders of Sr. Dn. Juan Peon Contreras, Director of the Museo Yucateco, and after an absence of a month, returned, bringing the statue concealed there by Dr. Le Plongeon, in triumph to Mérida. The commission was accompanied by a military force for protection, and the progress of the returning expedition was the occasion of a grand reception in the town of Izamal, where poems and addresses were made, which are preserved in a pamphlet of 27 pages. An account of its arrival at Mérida, on March 1, is given in the *Periödico Oficial* of the day following. The entrance of the statue was greeted by a procession composed of officials, societies, and children of the public schools. The streets were filled with spectators, and addresses were made and poems were recited. The following is a quotation from this article:—

"The Statue of Chac-Mool measures a little more than 9 feet in length. Its beautiful head is turned to one side in a menacing attitude, and it has a face of ferocious appearance. It is cut from a stone almost as hard as granite. Seated upon a pedestal, with its arms crossed upon the abdomen, it appears as if about to raise

itself in order to execute a cruel and bloody threat. This precious object of antiquity is worthy of the study of thoughtful men. History and archæology in their grave and profound investigations will certainly discover some day the secret which surrounds all the precious monuments which occupy the expanse of our rich soil, an evident proof of the ancient civilization of the Mayas, now attracting the attention of the Old World. The entrance of the Statue of Chac-Mool into the Capital will form an epoch in the annals of Yucatan history, and its remembrance will be accompanied by that of the worthy Governor under whose administration our Museum has been enriched with so invaluable a gift."

The reception, judging from the article in the journal above quoted, must have been imposing. It was the intention of the authorities to place the statue in the Yucatan Museum, but this purpose was defeated by its removal to Mexico, by a government steamer, in the month of April, to enrich the National Museum of that city.

All the above proceedings took place without the consent, and contrary to the wishes, of Dr. Le Plongeon, who at that time was absent from Mérida, in the Island of Cozumel, and was therefore unable to offer opposition.

In order to furnish further testimony to the high estimation in which the statue of Chac-Mool is held in Yucatan, the following notice, offered to the writer for publication, by Sr. Dn. Juan Peon Contreras, director of the museum referred to above, and which afterward appeared in *El Pensamiento*, of Mérida, of date Aug. 12, is inserted entire:—

OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEO YUCATECO.

To Sr. D. AUGUSTIN DEL RIO,

Provisional Governor of the State of Yucatan.

A short historical notice of the stone image "Chac-Mool," discovered in the celebrated ruins of Chichen-Itza, by the learned Archæologist, Mr. Le Plongeon, to be preserved in the National Museum of Mexico, for which place it is destined.

MÉRIDA, 1877.

There exist, in the deserts of Yucatan, at about 36 leagues—108 miles

—from Mérida, some very notable monumental ruins, known by the name of Chichen-Itza, whose origin is lost in the night of time. Their situation, in the hostile section of revolutionary Indians *(Sublivados)*, caused them to be very little visited until, to the general astonishment, an American traveller, the wise archæologist and Doctor, Mr. Augustus Le Plongeon, in company with his young and most intelligent wife, fixed his residence among them for some months towards the end of 1874. They both gave themselves up with eagerness to making excellent photographic views of what was there worthy of notice, to be sent to the ministry of protection, the depository which the law provides in order to obtain the rights of ownership. They did not limit themselves to this work. The illustrious Doctor and his wife, worthy of admiration on many accounts, supported with patient heroism the sufferings and risks of that very forlorn neighborhood, and passed their days in producing exact plans, and transferring to paper the wall paintings that are still preserved upon some of the edifices, such as *Akabsib*—(dark writings).

There came a day on which one, endowed like the visitor, had by abstruse archæological reasoning, and by his meditation, determined the place, and, striking the spot with his foot, he said, "Here it is, here it will be found." The language of this man—better said, of this genius —will appear exaggerated. It can be decided when he has succeeded in bringing to light the interesting work which he is writing about his scientific investigations in the ruins of Yucatan. Let us finish this short preamble, and occupy ourselves with the excavation of the statue.

Chac-Mool is a Maya word which means tiger. So the discoverer desired to name it, who reserved to himself the reasons for which he gave it this name. He discovered a stone base, oblong, somewhat imperfect, that measured 9 Spanish inches in thickness, by 5 feet 3½ inches in length, and 2 feet 10 inches in width. Above it reposed in a single piece of stone the colossal image whose weight amounted to about 3,500 lbs. Its imposing and majestic attitude, and the insignia which adorned it, leads to the supposition that it was some notable leader of the time, a king, or perhaps a noble of those regions. Such deductions were hazarded as suppositions. The discoverer supposed it buried by its kindred and subjects more than 12,000 years ago. The reasons shall I attempt to give? It was reached at 8 meters in depth, not far from the manorial castle of Chichen, to which the approach is by a staircase of 90 steps, which are visible from the four cardinal points. According to the above discoverer there existed a kind of mausoleum or monument—erected to the memory of the ruler, Chac-Mool, by the queen, his wife—until it was destroyed at the time of the invasion of Chichen-Itza by the Nahuas or Toltecs, at the end of the second century of the Christian era. Even now is preserved at a short distance from the place where was exhumed the statue of Chac-Mool, a statue of stone representing a tiger, also above a quadrilateral base, which once had a

human head, and which it is presumed surmounted the monument before the time of its destruction.

Employing a protection of limbs and trunks of trees, and providing a capstan with ropes made from the bark of the grapevine, by force of perseverance the learned LePlongeon was able to land upon the surface of the soil the most noteworthy archæological treasure which has been discovered to this day in Yucatan.

Ignorant of the laws of the country, this American traveller thought that he might at once call himself the proprietor of the statue, and succeeded in bringing it, in 15 days, as far as the uninhabited town of Pisté, two miles from the ruins, upon a wagon constructed for the purpose, hiding it in the neighborhood of the above town, while he informed himself about his supposed rights. The indefatigable traveller came to Mérida, where, in the meantime the Government of the State asserted that the statue was the general property of the nation and not that of the discoverer.

Leaving for a better opportunity the questions relative to it, Dr. Le Plongeon occupied himself in visiting other ruins, busying himself between the Island of Cozumel and that of Mugeres, until peace should be established in the State, and the Sr. General Guerra should be nominated Provisional Governor.

At the suggestion of the subscriber the Governor allowed the transportation of this statue to the Museo Yucateco, and the Director of the Museo, in compliance with his duty, counting upon the assistance of an armed force necessary for an expedition of such a dangerous character, left this capital February 1, 1877, to the end of securing the preservation of an object so important to the ancient history of the country. Overcoming the thousand difficulties that presented themselves in opening a road of 6 leagues that was known to the birds alone, over a surface covered with mounds and inequalities, he constructed a new wagon on which the colossal statue was dragged along by more than 150 Indians, in turn, who, in their fanatical superstition, asserted that, during the late hours of the night there came from the mouth of the figure the words "*Conex! Conex!*" which signifies in their language, "Let us go! Let us go!"

Upon the 26th of the same month and year, the historical and monumental city of Izamal received with enthusiastic demonstrations the statue of the king Chac-Mool. Brilliant compositions referring to it were read, which, in a printed form, will accompany it for the archives of the Museo National. When it arrived at Mérida it had a no less lively reception on the morning of the 1st of March, 1877.

A little later it was received into the Museo Yucateco upon the same rustic wagon on which it had traversed the 6 leagues of almost inaccessible country from Pisté to Oitas, from where begins the broad road.

It was intended to surround it with a wooden fence upon which should be engraved this inscription in golden letters :—

"CHAC-MOOL
The discovery of the wise archæologist. Mr. Le Plongeon, in the ruins of Chichen-Itza.

General Protasio Guerra being Governor of the State of Yucatan. It was brought to the Museo Yucateco on the 1st of March, 1877, by Juan Péon Contreras, Director of the Museum."

Still later, at the decision of the Governor of the State, Sr. D. Augustin del Rio, its transfer to the National Museum of Mexico was permitted, where so notable an archæological monument will show to better advantage, leaving in its place a copy in plaster, made by a skilful Yucatan artist.

The Director of the Museo Yucateco,

JUAN PEON CONTRERAS.

MÉRIDA, 1877.

NOTE. The unexpected arrival and early return to Vera Cruz of the national war steamer Libertad, which conducted the recovered statue to the Department of State, gave no time in which a copy of it could be taken in this capital, the Government of the State reserving the right to ask of the President of the Republic, who resides in Mexico, to send such a copy to the Museo Yucateco, as a just compensation.

PEON CONTRERAS.

April 6, 1877.

After the defeat of Dr. Le Plongeon's cherished hopes of exhibiting his statue at Philadelphia, this traveller passed his time in investigations among the islands of the east coast of the Peninsula, particularly those of Mugeres and Cozumel. His observations there—as well as much additional information regarding the architecture of Chichen-Itza and Uxmal, and his deductions therefrom—are contained in a communication to the Minister of the United States at Mexico, and are here given in abstract, as throwing light upon the discoveries that have been made, and the inferences which have been drawn from them.

This appeal contains a statement of the wrongs suffered by Dr. Le Plongeon in being prevented from removing his

statue and other discoveries from the country; and also a demand for redress and compensation, as an American citizen, for the seizure and appropriation, in the first instance by the government of Yucatan, and afterwards by the supreme government at Mexico, of the work of art which he had brought to light. This statement, with the correspondence which accompanies it, is intended also to be offered to the consideration of the President of the United States for such action as may be considered proper in the premises.

The extracts made are those only which relate to the investigations of Dr. Le Plongeon in the course of his travels; for although great sympathy is due him for his misfortunes and disappointments, a legal statement of his wrongs cannot be discussed in this paper.

EXTRACTS FROM A COMMUNICATION OF DR. LE PLONGEON TO THE HONORABLE JOHN W. FOSTER, MINISTER OF THE UNITED STATES AT MEXICO, DATED ISLAND OF COZUMEL, MAY 1, 1877.

Chichen-Itza is situated in the territories occupied by subjects of Don Crecencio Poot, Chief of Chan-Santa-Cruz. In 1847, this chief and others refused to acknowledge any longer their allegiance to the Mexican Government, and seceded, declaring war to the knife to the white inhabitants of Yucatan. Since that time they have conquered a portion of that State, and hold peaceful possession of the best towns. They have destroyed the principal cities of the east and south. These are now reduced to mere villages with few inhabitants. The churches in ruins, mostly converted into fortresses, the houses abandoned by their dwellers, invaded by rank vegetation, a refuge for bats, owls, and other prowling animals, are crumbling to the ground every day more and more, no one daring to make repairs, lest the Indians should burn and destroy them again. For leagues around the country is deserted. Only a few venturesome spirits have plucked up heart to establish farms where the soil is the richest. They cultivate them with armed servants, so great is their dread of their fierce enemies.

Three miles from Pisté, one of the most advanced posts on the eastern frontier, and beyond the military lines, stand the ruins of Chichen Itza. There lay buried, since probably 5000 years, that superb statue, together with other most precious relics, at eight meters under ground, amidst thick forests, unknown to the whole world, not only to the modern, but also to the comparatively ancient, for it has escaped destruction from the hands of the natives. A people, starting from the vicinity

of Palenque, invaded all the regions west and south of what, in our days, is called the Yucatan Peninsula, arriving at Bacalar. From that place, following the coast, they ravaged the eastern part of the country, and at or about the beginning of the Christian era laid siege to the *cities of the holy and wise men* (Itzaes), the seat of a very advanced civilization, where arts, sciences and religion flourished. After a weary and protracted defence, and many hard-fought battles, the beautiful capital fell at last into the power of the invaders. There, in the impulse of their ignorance, in the heat of their wrath, they destroyed many objects of art. They vented their rage most particularly on the effigies and portraits of the ancient kings and rulers of the vanquished, when and where they could find them, decapitating most and breaking a great many of the beautiful statues wrought by their subjects in their honor, as mementoes by which they remembered and venerated their memories. Chaacmol, whose hiding place they ignored, as they did that of his elder brother, *Huuncay*, whose statue is still where his friends deposited it, 12 meters under the surface of the ground, escaped the fury of the enraged iconoclasts. Not so, however, the effigies and emblems that adorned and surmounted the monuments raised to perpetuate the remembrance of their most beneficent government, and the love they professed for their people. Even these monuments themselves were afterwards disgraced, being used as places for histrionic performances.

The places of concealment of these and other most precious relics, amongst them probably the libraries of the *H-Menes* or learned and wise men, yet to be excavated, were revealed to my wife and myself on deciphering some hieroglyphics, mural paintings and bas-reliefs.

On the 5th of January, 1876, I conducted the statue of Chaacmol on the road to Oitas, and at about a quarter of a mile from Pisté, that is to say, far enough to put it out of the reach of mischief from the soldiers of the post, I placed it in a thicket about 50 yards from the road. There, with the help of Mrs. Le Plongeon, I wrapped it in oil-cloth, and carefully built over it a thatched roof, in order to protect it from the inclemencies of the atmosphere. Leaving it surrounded by a brush fence, we carefully closed the boughs on the passage that led from the road to the place of concealment, so that a casual traveller, ignorant of the existence of such an object, would not even suspect it. Many a day our only meal has consisted of a hard Indian cake and a bit of garlic and water.

The queen of Itza is represented under the effigy of an *ara*, eating a human heart, on several bas-reliefs that adorned the monuments she raised to the beloved of her own heart, Chaacmol. The scene of his death is impressively portrayed on the walls which the queen caused to be raised to the memory of her husband, in the two exquisite rooms, the ruins of which are yet to be seen upon the south end of the east wall of the gymnasium. Those rooms were a shrine indeed, but a shrine where the conjugal love of the queen alone worshipped the memory of her

departed lover. She adorned the outer walls with his effigies, his totem-tiger, and his shield and coat of arms between tiger and tiger. Whilst on an admirably polished stucco that covers the stones in the interior of the rooms she had his deeds, his and her own life in fact, with the customs of the time, painted in beautiful life-like designs, superbly drawn and sweetly colored. The history of the twin brothers is there faithfully portrayed. There is also a life-like likeness, painted in brilliant colors, of Chaacmol. Unhappily such precious works of art have been much defaced, more than by time, by the impious hands of ignorant and vain fools, who have thought their names of greater interest to the world than the most remarkable drawings on which they have inscribed them.

Chaacmol is there represented full of wrath, the hand clinched in an altercation with his younger brother, *Aac*. This latter, after cowardly murdering the friend of his infancy with thrusts of his lance—one under his right shoulder blade, another in his left lung, near the region of the heart, and the third in the lumbar region—fled to Uxmal in order to escape the vengeance of the queen, who cherished their young chieftain who had led them so many times to victory. At their head he had conquered all the surrounding nations. Their kings and rulers had come from afar to lay their sceptres and their hearts at the feet of their pretty and charming queen. Even white and long bearded men had made her presents and offered her their tributes and homage. He had raised the fame of their beautiful capital far above that of any other cities in Mayapan and Xibalba. He had opened the country to the commerce of the whole world, and merchants of Asia and Africa would bring their wares and receive in exchange the produce of their factories and of their lands. In a word, he had made Chichen a great metropolis in whose temples pilgrims from all parts came to worship and even offer their own persons as a sacrifice to the Almighty. There also came the wise men of the world to consult the *H-Menes*, whose convent, together with their astronomical observatory, may be seen at a short distance from the government palace and museum. This curious story, yet unknown to the world, was revealed to my wife and myself, as the work of restoring the paintings advanced step by step, and also from the careful study of the bas-reliefs which adorn the room at the base of the monument. You can see photographs of these bas-reliefs in the album I forwarded to the Ministry of Public Instruction. We have also in our possession the whole collection of tracings of the paintings in the funeral chamber.

Motul is a pretty town of 4000 inhabitants, situated about 10 leagues from Mérida. Having never suffered from the Indians it presents quite a thriving appearance. Its productions consist principally in the making henequen bags and the raising of cattle. At the time of the Spanish conquest it was the site of an important settlement, if we may judge from the number of mounds and other edifices scattered in its vicinity.

All are in a very ruinous condition, having been demolished to obtain materials for the buildings of the modern village and the construction of fences. It was among these ruins that, for the first time in Yucatan, I gazed upon the incontestable proofs that the worship of the phallus had once been in vogue among some of the inhabitants of the Peninsula. I discovered emblems of that worship, so common with the natives of Hindostan and Egypt and other parts of the world, on the Eastern side of a very ruinous pyramid, raised on a plot of ground, in the outskirts of this village. Since then, I have often met with these emblems of the religious rites of the Nahuas and Caras, and whilst as at Uxmal, they stare at the traveller from every ornament of the buildings and are to be found in every court-yard and public place, it is a remarkable fact that they are to be met with nowhere in the edifices of Chichen-Itza.

There can be no possible doubt that different races or rather nations practicing distinct religious rites inhabited the country at different epochs and destroyed each other by war. So at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards the monuments of Chichen-Itza were in ruins and were looked upon with awe, wonder and respect, by the inhabitants of the country, when the city of Uxmal was thickly peopled. There cannot be any reasonable doubt that the Nahuas, the invaders and destroyers of the Itza metropolis, introduced the phallic worship into Yucatan. The monuments of Uxmal do not date from so remote an antiquity as those of Chichen, notwithstanding that Uxmal was a large city when Chichen was at the height of its glory. Some of its most ancient edifices have been enclosed with new walls and ornamentation to suit the taste and fancy of the conquerors. These inner edifices belong to a very ancient period, and among the débris I have found the head of a bear exquisitely sculptured out of a block of marble. It is in an unfinished state. When did bears inhabit the peninsula? Strange to say, the Maya does not furnish the name for the bear. Yet one-third of this tongue is pure Greek. Who brought the dialect of Homer to America? Or who took to Greece that of the Mayas? Greek is the offspring of Sanscrit. Is Maya? or are they coeval? A clue for ethnologists to follow the migrations of the human family on this old continent. Did the bearded men whose portraits are carved on the massive pillars of the fortress at Chichen-Itza, belong to the Mayan nations? The Maya language is not devoid of words from the Assyrian.

We made up our minds to visit Aké, the place where the Spaniards escaping from Chichen took refuge in the first days of the conquest. The land where these ruins stand forms a part of the hacienda of Aké. It belongs to Don Bernardo Peon, one of the wealthiest men of the country, but on account of the insalubrity of the climate it is to-day well nigh abandoned. Only a few Indian servants, living in a constant dread of the paludean fevers that decimate their families, remained to take care of the scanty herds of cattle and horses which form now the whole

wealth of the farm. In the first days of March we arrived at the gate of the farm-house. The Majordomo had received orders to put himself and his men at our disposal. The ruined farm-house lies at the foot of a cyclopean structure. From the veranda, rising majestically in bold relief against the sky, is to be seen the most interesting and best preserved monument of Aké, composed of three platforms superposed. They terminate in an immense esplanade crowned by three rows of 12 columns each. These columns, formed of huge square stones roughly hewn, and piled one above the other to a height of 4 meters, are the *Katuns* that served to record certain epochs in the history of the nation, and indicate in this case an antiquity of at least 5760 years. The monuments of Aké are peculiar, and the only specimens of their kind to be found among these ruined cities. They are evidently the handiwork of a herculean and uncouth race—the enormous height of each step in the staircase proves it—of that race of giants whose great bones and large skulls are now and then disinterred, and whose towering forms, surmounted by heads disproportionately small, we have seen pictured on the walls of Chichen-Itza. They recalled forcibly to our minds the antique *Guanches*, the ancient inhabitants of the Canary Islands, whose gigantic mummies are yet found in the sepulchral caverns of Teneriffe, and whose peculiar sandals with red straps so closely resemble those seen on the feet of Chaacmol. The edifices of Aké are composed of large blocks of stone, generally square, often oblong in shape, superposed, and held together merely by their enormous weight, without the aid of mortar or cement of any sort. We did not tarry in this strange city more than eight days. The malaria of the place very seriously affected the health of my wife, and obliged us to hasten back to Tixkokob. We brought with us the photograph views, and plans of the principal buildings, regretting not to perfect our work by a complete survey of the whole of them, scattered as they are over a large extent of ground.

Our investigations in Uxmal revealed to our minds some interesting facts in the lives of the three brothers of the tradition. In Chichen we discovered the place of concealment of the two brothers *Huuncay* and *Chaacmol.* That of the third brother, *Aac*, was not to be found. Yet I was certain it must exist somewhere. Many persons who are not acquainted with the customs and religious beliefs of those ancient people have questioned me on the strange idea of burying such beautiful objects of art at so great a depth, yet the reason is very simple. The nations that inhabited the whole of Central America—the Mayas, the Nahuas, the Caras or Carians—had, with the Siamese even of to-day, and the Egyptians of old, many notions in common concerning the immortality of the soul, and its existence after its earthly mission was accomplished. They believed that the sentient and intelligent principle, *pixan*, which inhabits the body, survived the death of that body, and was bound to return to earth, and live other and many mundane existences;

but that between each separate existence that *pixan* went to a place of delight, *Caan*, where it enjoyed all sorts of bliss for a proportionate time, and as a reward for the good actions it had done while on earth. Passing to a place of punishment, *Metnal*, it suffered all kinds of evils during also a certain time in atonement for its sins. Then it was to return and live again among men. But as the material body was perishable, they made effigies in perfect resemblance to it. These were sometimes of wood, sometimes of clay, and sometimes of stone, according to the wealth or social position of the individual; and after burning the body, the ashes were enclosed in the statue or in urns that they placed near by. Around and beside these were arranged the weapons and the ornaments used by the deceased, if a warrior; the tools of his trade; if a mechanic; and books, if a priest or learned man, in order that they should find them at hand when the *pixan* should come back and animate the statue or image.

To return to our investigations at Uxmal. On examining the ornaments on the cornice of the Eastern front of the monument known as "The House of the Governor," I was struck with their similarity to those which adorn the most ancient edifice of Chichen and whose construction, I judge, dates back 12,000 years. But what most particularly called my attention were the hieroglyphics that surrounded a sitting figure placed over the main entrance in the centre of the building. There were plainly to me the names of *Huuncay* and *Chaacmol*, and on both sides of the figure, now headless, the name of the individual it was intended to represent, *Aac*, the younger brother and murderer. And on the North-west corner of the second terrace was his private residence, a very elegant structure of a most simple and graceful architecture, ornamented with his totem. I afterwards found a pillar written with his name in hieroglyphics and a bust of marble very much defaced. Around the neck is a collar or necklace sustaining a medallion with his name. In the figure that adorns the façade of the palace he is represented sitting, and under his feet are to be seen the bodies of three personages, two men and one woman, flayed. Unhappily these also have been mutilated by the hand of time or of iconoclasts. They are headless, but I entertain no doubt as to whom they were intended to represent, *Huuncay*, *Chaacmol* and the queen, his wife. It is worthy of notice that while the phallic emblems are to be seen in great profusion in every other building at Uxmal, there is not a single trace of them in or on the "House of the Governor," or its appurtenances.

Yucatan being in a state of political effervescence, we determined to visit the islands of Mugeres and Cozumel, on the East coast of Yucatan, taking our chance of falling into the hands of the Indians and being murdered.

Accordingly, on the 20th of October, 1876, we embarked on board the "Viri," a small coasting sloop, and with the mists of the evening, the houses of Progreso faded from our view and were lost in the haze of

the horizon. Contrary winds retarded our journey and obliged us to cast anchor near shore every night. It was not until after ten tiresome days that we, at last, saw the dim outline of Mugeres island rise slowly over the waves. As we drew near, the tall and slender forms of the cocoa trees, gracefully waving their caps of green foliage with the breeze, while their roots seemed to spring from the blue waters of the ocean, indicated the spot where the village houses lay on the shore under their umbrage. Seen at a distance, the spot presents quite a romantic aspect. The island is a mere rock, elevated only a few feet above the level of the sea, six miles long and about one-half a mile wide in its widest parts. In some places it is scarcely 200 steps across. The population consists of 500 souls, more or less. Its principal industry is fishing. For Indian corn and beans—the staple articles of food throughout Yucatan—they depend altogether on the main land; vegetables of any kind are an unknown luxury, notwithstanding there are some patches of good vegetable land in the central part. The island possesses a beautiful and safe harbor; at one time it was the haven where the pirates that infested the West Indian seas were wont to seek rest from their hazardous calling. Their names are to be seen to-day rudely carved on the *sapote* beams that form the lintels of the doorways of the antique shrine whose ruins crown the southernmost point of the island.

It is to this shrine of the Maya Venus that as far down as the Spanish conquest, pilgrims repaired yearly to offer their prayers and votive presents to propitiate that divinity. Cogolludo tells us that it was on her altar that the priest who accompanied the adventurers who first landed at the island, after destroying the effigies of the Goddess and of her companions and replacing them by a picture of the Virgin Mary, celebrated mass for the first time on those coasts in presence of a throng of astonished natives. They gave to the island the name of Mugeres (women). I was told that formerly many of the votive offerings had been disinterred from the sand in front of the building. The soil at that place is profusely strewn with fragments of images wrought in clay, representing portions of the human body. I was myself so fortunate as to fall in with the head of a priestess, a beautiful piece of workmanship, moulded according to the most exact proportions of Grecian art. It had formed part of a brazier that had served to burn perfumes on the altar near which I found it. I happened to use part of that vase to hold some live coals, and notwithstanding the many years that had elapsed since it had last served, a most sweet odor arose and filled the small building.

I had read in Cogolludo that in olden times, on the main land, opposite to the island of Mugeres, was the city of *Ekab*. I was desirous of visiting its ruins, but no one could indicate their exact position. They did not even know of the name. They spoke of Meco, of Nisucté, of Kankun, of extensive ruins of buildings in that place, where they

provide themselves with hewn stones. After much delay I was able to obtain a boat and men. We set sail for Meco, the nearest place situated on another island close to the shores of the main land. There I found a ruined edifice surrounded by a wall forming an inclosure, adorned with rows of small columns. In the centre of the inclosure an altar. The edifice, composed of two rooms, is built on a graduated pyramid composed of seven *andenes*. This building is without a doubt an ancient temple. We next visited Nisuctè. There we found the same sort of monuments but built on a large scale. These places have merely been shrines visited by the pilgrims on their way to and from the altar of Venus. The main point of importance gained in visiting these ruins was that this whole coast had been inhabited by a race of dwarfs and that these edifices were their work. We had seen their portraits carved on the pillars of the fortress at Chichen-Itza. We had seen also their pictures among the several paintings. We had heard of the Indian tradition, very current among the natives, that many of the monuments of Yucatan had been constructed by the *Alux-ob*. But not until we visited these places and entered their houses, did we become satisfied of the fact of their existence that till then we had considered a myth. Kankun, where the ruins of numerous houses cover a great extent of ground, must have been the real site of *Ekab*. The dwarfish inhabitants of these cities must have been a very tolerant sort of people in religious matters, since in the same temple, nay on the very same altar, we have found side by side the phallic emblems with the image of *Kukulcan*.

Our explorations in that part of the country were at an end. We were beginning to grow tired of our fish diet, and looked with anxiety for an opportunity to continue our voyage to the island of Cozumel. This island, called by the ancient Mayas *Cozmil* (place for swallows), was the rendezvous of Indian pilgrims who flocked thither every year to pay homage at the numerous temples, the ruins of which are to be found in the thick forests that now cover it. The expected opportunity offering we reached the village of San Miguel February 3, 1877. Cozumel is a beautiful island of about 45 miles in length and 12 in breadth. The fertility of its soil is evinced by the luxuriant growth of the thick and impenetrable forests of valuable timber that have sprung up since its abandonment by its former inhabitants and which serve either for purposes of building or ornamentation. Cocoa-nuts, plantains, bananas, pineapples, ananas and other tropical fruits grow abundantly. Vanilla, yams, sweet potatoes and vegetables of all kinds can be produced in plenty, while honey and wax, the work of wild harmless bees, and copal are gathered on the trees. The tobacco, which is to-day the article that engrosses the mind and monopolizes the attention of the planters, is of a superior quality, emulating the Cuban production. On the other hand the thickets are alive with pheasants, quail, pigeons, wild pigs and other descriptions of game. The waters swarm with the most excellent

fish and innumerable turtles sport in the lagoons, while curlews, snipe, ducks and other aquatic fowls flock on their shores; and not the least of the gifts with which the munificient hand of nature has so bountifully endowed this delicious oasis of the ocean is its delightful and soft, yet invigorating, climate, that makes well nigh useless the art of the physician.

At some epoch it is evident that the whole island was under cultivation, which is proved by the stone fences that divide it into small parcels or farms like a checker-board. The island, like the whole of the Yucatan peninsula, has evidently been upraised from the bottom of the sea by the action of volcanic fires, and the thin coating of arable loam of surprising fertility which covers a substratum of calcareous stones, is the result of the accumulation of detriti, mixed with the residuum of animal and vegetable life of thousands of years. The greater part of this island is as yet archæologically unexplored. I have no doubt that thorough explorations in the depths of its forests and of the caves would bring to light very interesting relics, which would repay the trouble and expense. Rough and rude as is the construction of the monuments of the island, the architecture possesses the same character as that of the more elaborate edifices on the main land. The same design of entablature, with some little difference in the cornice, the same triangular arch, the same shaped rooms—long and narrow, but all on a miniature scale. They seem more like dolls' houses than dwellings for man. One of the best preserved of these singular buildings was visited, and two other constructions, consisting of independent and separate arches, the only ones we ever met with in our rambles in Yucatan. The edifice formed at one time, with the two triumphal arches, part of a series of constructions now completely ruined. It was a temple composed, as are all structures of the kind, of two apartments, a front or ante-chamber, and the sanctuary or holy of holies. In this case the ante-chamber measures 59 inches in width by 2 yards and 33 inches in length, its height being 2 yards and 30 inches from the floor to the apex of the triangular arch that serves as ceiling. The sanctuary is entered through a doorway 1 yard high and 18 inches wide, and is narrower than the front apartments, measuring only 34 inches across. The whole edifice is externally 3 yards high, 4 yards 29 inches long and 4 yards wide. If we judge of the stature of the builders by the size of the building, we may really imagine this to have been the kingdom of Liliput, visited by Gulliver. The triumphal arches present the same proportions as the temple I have just described, which is by no means the earliest archaic structure. Old people are not wanting who pretend to have seen these *Alux-ob*, whom they describe as reaching the extraordinary stature of 2 feet. They tell us of their habits and mischievousness, tales which forcibly recall to our minds the legends of "the little people" so credited among all classes of society in Ireland. There can be no reasonable doubt but that a very diminutive race of men, but little advanced in the arts of civilization, dwelt on

these islands and along the eastern coast of Yucatan, and that many of the edifices, the ruins of which are to be seen in that part of the country, are the works of their hands, as the tradition has it.

The attempt has been made in the previous pages to bring the discoveries of Dr. Le Plongeon and his own account of his labors and inferences into such a form that they may be easily considered by those competent to determine their importance and bearing. The value of the statue called Chac-Mool, as an archæological treasure, cannot be questioned. It is the only remaining human figure of a high type of art, finished "in the round" known to have been discovered in America since the occupation of Maya territory in the 16th century.

The idols of Copan have expressive human countenances,* though they are distorted in order to inspire awe and fear in the beholder, but no attempt was there made to depict the graceful proportions of the nude figure. They stand perpendicularly, carved from solid blocks of stone, and are from 10 to 15 feet in height. The figures upon them are bas-reliefs, occupying generally only $\frac{2}{3}$ of the length of the front, while the back of the block is a straight surface and is covered with emblems and hieroglyphics. The sculptures of Palenque† have many of them much artistic beauty, but they are all of them attached figures, as it is believed are also the beautiful statues of Nineveh.‡ Even the slightest touching makes a figure "in relief." This statue from Chichen-Itza has all the appearance of being intended as the likeness of a man, and much skill is shown in the delineation of the proportions. It is entirely detached, and reposes upon a base carved from the same block of stone as the figure, which gives it a higher rank in sculpture than any other in America, of which we have ocular proof at this day. It is a noteworthy circumstance in the controversy regarding the seizure of the statue

* Stephens' Travels in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan, vol. I., page 158. † Id. vol. II., page 349. ‡ Encyclopædia Britannica. Boston, 1859: *Article* Sculpture.

by the Yucatan Government, and afterwards by that of Mexico, that no doubt in regard to its authenticity, so far as is known to the writer, has been expressed on the part of those who would naturally be the best judges of objects found in their own country. Among the Le Plongeon photographs of sculptures from Uxmal is a head in demi-relief, which resembles in the lineaments of the face those of this statue so much as to offer a striking likeness, and this agrees with the theory of the intimate connection of Chichen-Itza and Uxmal, adopted in the communication to Hon. J. W. Foster.

Diego de Landa, second Bishop of Yucatan, in his account of that country written in 1566, speaks of two similar statues observed by him at the same locality, Chichen-Itza, which place he speaks of as famous for its ruins.* His description is: "I found there sculptured lions, vases, and other objects, fashioned with so much skill that no one would be tempted to declare that that people made them without instruments of metal. There I found also two men sculptured, each made of a single stone, and girded according to the usage of the Indians. They held their heads in a peculiar manner, and had ear-rings in their ears, as the Indians wear them, and a point formed a projection behind the neck, which entered a deep hole in the neck, and thus adorned the statue was complete." He also speaks of the practice of burying articles used by the dead with their ashes,† and he says: "As regards Seigneurs and people of superior condition, they burn their remains, and deposit their ashes in large urns. They then build temples over them, as one sees was anciently done, by what is found at Izamal."‡

The statue discovered seems to resemble those spoken of by Landa in all the peculiarities mentioned. He also refers to the custom among the women of filing the teeth like a saw, which was considered by them to be ornamental.§

* Relacion de las Cosas de Yucatan, de Diego de Landa. By L. Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg. Paris, 1864, page 347. † Id. 197. ‡ Id. 199. § Id. 183.

A remark to Dr. Le Plongeon about the statues above described drew from him the following statement: "We have seen the remnants of the statues you referred to as mentioned by Landa; some one has broken them to pieces." He also speaks of the resemblance of the statue he discovered to those of ancient Egypt, from the careful finish of the head and the lesser degree of attention bestowed on the other parts of the body.

Dr. Le Plongeon has stated in the first of the three communications contained in this paper, that from his interpretation of mural paintings and hieroglyphics in the building upon the the South-East wall of the Gymnasium at Chichen-Itza, he was induced to make the excavation which resulted in his discovery. Elsewhere we learn that in the same building, and also on the tablets about the ears of the statue, he was able to read the name Chac-Mool, &c., &c. (Chaac or Chac in Maya means chieftain, Mol or Mool means paw of an animal.) He says that the names he gives, "were written on the monuments where represented, written in characters just as intelligible to my wife and myself, as this paper is to you in latin letters. Every personage represented on these monuments is known by name, since either over the head or at the feet the name is written." He also states that he knows where the ancient books of the *H-Menes* lie buried, as well as other statues. The discovery of one of these hidden books would be a service of priceless value.

A perusal of the communications contained in this paper lead to the impression that their writer accepts many of the theories advanced by Brasseur de Bourbourg, that he is a believer in the interpretations of Landa, and that he thinks he has been able to establish a system which enables him to read Maya inscriptions.

Dr. Le Plongeon has been accompanied and assisted in all his labors by his accomplished wife, and he has frequently stated that a great part of the credit for the results achieved is due to her intelligent judgment and skilful execution.

His last date is from Belize, British Honduras, September 1. In that letter he announces the preparation of a paper for the Royal Geographical Society of London, in which he says he shall give his researches *in extenso*.

After four years of toil and exposure to danger, and after a large expenditure of money paid for services in opening roads, clearing ruins, and making excavations, Dr. Le Plongeon finds himself deprived of all the material results of his labors and sacrifices which could secure him an adequate return. We hope that he may soon receive just and satisfactory treatment from the government, and a fitting recognition and remuneration from the scientific world.

In judging of the subject here presented, the reader will bear in mind that facts substantiated should not be rejected, even if the theories founded on them advance beyond the light of present information.

In August, Dr. Le Plongeon sent the following letter with the request that it should be published in a form which would allow of its presentation to the *Congrès International des Américanistes*, which would be held at Luxembourg in the month of September. It was printed in the Boston Daily Advertiser, in the issues of Sept. 3d and 4th, and is now repeated in the same type in this connection. The spelling of the name Chac-Mool in the letter was changed by the writer from that employed in the text by Dr. Le Plongeon, which is invariably *Chaacmol;* a liberty taken in consequence of the unanimous preference in favor of the spelling Chac-Mool shown in all the written or printed articles from Yucatan relating to this discovery, which have come to our observation. Copies of the letter were sent to Luxembourg, and also to the Bureau of the Société des Américanistes at Paris.

Letter from Dr. Le Plongeon.

Island of Cozumel, Yucatan,
June 15, 1877.

Stephen Salisbury, jr., esq., Worcester, Mass.:—

Dear Sir,—....The London Times of Wednesday, January 3, 1877, contains views on the projected congress of the so-called Americanists, that is expected to be held at Luxembourg in September next. Was the writing intended for a damper? If so, it did not miss its aim. It must have frozen to the very core the enthusiasm of the many dreamers and speculators on the prehistoric nations that inhabited this western continent. As for me, I felt its chill even under the burning rays of the tropical sun of Yucatan, notwithstanding I am, or ought to be, well inured to them during the four years that my wife and myself are rambling among the ruined cities of the Mayas.

True, I am but a cool searcher of the stupendous monuments of the mighty races that are no more, but have left the history of their passage on earth written on the stones of the palaces of their rulers, upon the temples of their gods. The glowing fires of enthusiasm do not overheat my imagination, even if the handiwork of the ancient artists and architects—if the science of the Itza *H-Menes*—wise men, fill my heart with a surprise akin to admiration. Since four years we ask the stones to disclose the secrets they conceal. The portraits of the ancient kings, those of the men with long beards, who seem to have held high offices among these people, have become familiarized with us, and we with them. At times they appear to our eyes to be not quite devoid of life, not entirely deaf to our voice. Not unfrequently the meaning of some sculpture, of some character, of some painting,—till then obscure, unintelligible, puzzling,—all of a sudden becomes clear, easy to understand, full of meaning.

Many a strange story of human greatness and pride, of human, petty and degrading passions, weakness and imperfections, has thus been divulged to us;—while we were also told of the customs of the people; of the scientific acquirements of the *H-Menes;* of the religious rites observed by the *kins* (priests); of their impostures, and of the superstition they inculcated to the masses; of the communication held by the merchants of Chichen with the traders from Asia and Africa; of the politeness of courtiers and gracefulness of the queen; of the refinement of the court; of the funeral ceremonies, and of the ways they disposed of the dead; of the terrible invasions of barbarous Nahua tribes; of the destruction, at their hands, of the beautiful metropolis Chichen-Itza, the centre of civilization, the emporium of the countries comprised between the eastern shores of Mayapan and the western of Xibalba; of the subsequent decadence of the nations; of their internal strife during long ages. For here, in reckoning time, we must not count by centuries but millenaries. We do not, in thus speaking, indulge in conjectures—for, verily, the study of the walls leaves no room for supposition to him who quietly investigates and compares.

How far Mrs. Le Plongeon and myself have been able to interpret the mural paintings, basreliefs, sculptures and hieroglyphics, the results of our labors show. (Some of them have been lately published in the "Illustration Hispano-Americana" of Madrid.) The excavating of the magnificent statue of the Itza king, Chac-Mool, buried about five thousand years ago by his wife, the queen of Chichen, at eight metres under ground (that statue has just been wrenched from our hands by the Mexican government, without even an apology, but the photographs may be seen at the residence of Mr. Henry Dixon, No. 112 Albany street, Regent park, London, and the engravings of it in the "Ilustracion Hispano-Americana"); the knowledge of the place where lies that of Huuncay, the elder brother of Chac-Mool, interred at twelve metres under the surface—of the site where the *H-Menes* hid their libraries containing the history of their nation—the knowledge and sciences they had attained, would of itself be an answer to Professor Mommsen's ridiculous assertion, that we are anxious to find what *cannot be known*, or what would be *useless* if discovered. It is not the place here to refute the learned professor's sayings; nor is it worth while. Yet I should like to know if he would refuse as *useless* the treasures of King Priam because made of

gold that belongs to the archaic times—what gold does not? Or, if he would turn up his nose at the wealth of Agamemnon because he knows that the gold and precious stones that compose it were wrought by artificers who lived four thousand years ago, should Dr. Schliemann feel inclined to offer them to him. What says Mr. Mommsen?

Besides my discovery of the statues, bas-reliefs, etc., etc., which would be worth many thousands of pounds sterling to—if the Mexican government did not rob them from—the discoverers, the study of the works of generations that have preceded us affords me the pleasure of following the tracks of the human mind through the long vista of ages, to discover that its pretended progress and development are all imaginary, at least on earth. I have been unable to the present day to trace it. I really see no difference between the civilized man of today and the civilized man of five thousand years ago. I do not perceive that the human mind is endowed in our times with powers superior to those it possessed in ages gone by, but clearly discern that these powers are directed in different channels. Will Professor Mommsen pretend that this is also *useless* after being found? Man today is the same as man was when these monuments, which cause the wonder of the modern traveller, were reared. Is he not influenced by the same instincts, the same wants, the same aspirations, the same mental and physical diseases?

I consider mankind alike to the waters of the ocean; their surface is ever changing, while in their depths is the same eternal, unchangeable stillness and calm. So man superficially. He reflects the images of times and circumstances. His intellect develops and expands only according to the necessities of the moment and place. As the waves, he cannot pass the boundaries assigned to him by the unseen, impenetrable Power to which all things are subservient. He is irresistibly impulsed toward his inevitable goal—the grave. There, as far as he positively knows, all his powers are silenced. But from there also he sees springing new forms of life that have to fulfil, in their turn, their destiny in the great laboratory of creation. The exploration of the monuments of past generations, all bearing the peculiarities, the idiosyncracies of the builders, has convinced me that the energies of human mind and intellect are the same in all times. They come forth in proportion to the requirements of the part they are to represent in the great drama of life, the means in the stupendous mechanism of the universe being always perfectly and wisely adapted to the ends. It is therefore absurd to judge of mental attainments of man in different epochs and circumstances by comparison with our actual civilization. For me the teachings of archæology are these: "Tempora mutantur, mores etiam in illis; sicut ante homini etiam manent anima et mens."

Alchemists have gone out of fashion, thank God! Would that the old sort of antiquaries, who lose their time, and cause others to lose theirs also, in discussing idle speculations, might follow suit. History requires facts,—these facts, proofs. These proofs are not to be found in the few works of the travellers that have hastily visited the monuments that strew the soil of Central America, Mexico and Peru, and given of them descriptions more or less accurate—very often erroneous—with appreciations always affected by their individual prejudices. The customs and attainments of all sorts of the nations that have lived on the western continent, before it was America, must be studied in view of the monuments they have left; or of the photographs, tracings of mural paintings, etc., etc., which are as good as the originals themselves. Not even the writings of the chroniclers of the time of the Spanish conquest can be implicitly relied upon. The writers on the one hand were in all cases blinded by their religious fanaticism; in many by their ignorance; on the other, the people who inhabited the country at the time of the arrival of the conquerors were not the builders of the ancient monuments. Many of these were then in ruins and looked upon by the inhabitants, as they are today, with respect and awe. True, many of the habits and customs of the ancients, to a certain extent, existed yet among them; but disfigured, distorted

by time, and the new modes of thinking and living introduced by the invaders; while, strange to say, the language remained unaltered. Even today, in many places in Yucatan the descendants of the Spanish conquerors have forgotten the native tongue of their sires, and only speak *Maya*, the idiom of the vanquished. Traditions, religious rites, superstitious practices, dances, were handed down from generation to generation. But, as the sciences were of old the privilege of the few, the colleges and temples of learning having been destroyed at the downfall of Chichen, the knowledge was imparted by the fathers to their sons, under the seal of the utmost secrecy. Through the long vista of generations notwithstanding the few books that existed at the time of the conquest, and were in great part destroyed by Bisop Landa and other fanatical monks, the learning of the *H-Menes* became adulterated in passing from mouth to mouth, merely committed to memory, and was at last lost and changed into the many ridiculous notions and strange practices said to have been consigned afterward to these writings.

Withal the knowledge of reading those books was retained by some of the descendants of the *H-Menes*. I would not take upon myself to assert positively that some of the inhabitants of Peten—the place where the Itzas took refuge at the beginning of the Christian era after the destruction of their city—are not still in possession of the secret. At all events, I was told that people who could read the Maya *pic-huun* (books), and to whom the deciphering of the *Uooh* (letters) and the figurative characters was known, existed as far back as forty years ago, but kept their knowledge a secret, lest they should be persecuted by the priests as wizards and their precious volume wrenched from them and destroyed. The Indians hold them yet in great veneration. I am ready to give full credit to this assertion, for during my rambles and explorations in Peru and Bolivia I was repeatedly informed that people existed ensconced in remote nooks of the Andes, who could interpret the *quippus* (string writing) and yet made use of them to register their family records, keep account of their droves of llamas and other property.

I will not speak here at length of the monuments of Peru, that during eight years I have diligently explored; for, with but few exceptions, they dwindle into insignificance when compared with the majestic structures reared by the Mayas, the Caras, or Cariaus, and other nations of Central America, and become, therefore, devoid of interest in point of architecture and antiquity; excepting, however, the ruins of Tiahuanaco, that were already ruins at the time of the foundation of the Incas' empire, in the eleventh century of our era, and so old that the memory of the builders was lost in the abysm of time. The Indians used to say that these were the work of giants who lived *before the sun shone in the heavens*. It is well known that the Incas had no writing characters or hieroglyphics. The monuments raised by their hands do not afford any clew to their history. Dumb walls merely, their mutism leaves large scope to imagination, and one may conjecture any but the right thing. Of the historical records of that powerful but short-lived dynasty we have nothing left but the few imperfect and rotten *quippus* which are occasionally disinterred from the *huacas*.

If we desire to know anything about the civil laws and policy, the religious rites and ceremonies of the Incas, their scanty scientific attainments, and their very few and rude artistic attempts, we are obliged to recur to the "Comentarios reales" of Garcilasso de la Vega, to the *Décadas* of Herrera, to Zarata and other writers of the time of the conquest of Peru by Francisco Pizarro. None of them — Montesinos excepted — try to shed any light on the origin of *Manco-Ceapac* and that of his sister and wife, *Mama-Oello*, nor on the state of the country before their arrival at Cuzco.

I have been most happy in my researches into the history of this founder of the Inca dynasty, whom many consider a mere mythical being. In the library of the British Museum I came across an old Spanish manuscript, written by a Jesuit father, A. Anilla, under, as he asserts, the dictation of a certain *Catári*, an ex-*quippucamayoe*,—archive-keeper.

Writing now from memory, far away from my

books, notes, plans, etc., etc., left for safe-keeping in the hands of a friend in Merida, I do not remember the number of the catalogue. But it is easy to look for "*Las vidas de los hombres ilustres de la compania de Jesus en las Provincias del Peru*," where I have read of the origin of Manco-Ccapac, of his wanderings from the sea coasts to those of the lake of Titicaca, and hence through the country till at last he arrived at the village of Cuzco, where he was kindly received by the inhabitants and established himself. This MS. also speaks of the history of his ancestors, of their arrival at Tumbes after leaving their homes in the countries of the north in search of some lost relatives, of their slow progress toward the South, and the vain inquiries about their friends, etc., etc. Now that I have studied part of the history of the Mayas and become acquainted with their customs, as pictured in the mural paintings that adorn the walls of the inner room of the monument raised to the memory of Chac-Mool by the Queen of Itza, his wife, on the south end of the east wall of the gymnasium, at Chichen (the tracings of these paintings are in our power), and also in the traditions and customs of their descendants, by comparing them with those of the Quichuas, I cannot but believe that Manco's ancestors emigrated from Xibalba or Mayapan, carrying with them the notions of the mother country, which they inculcated to their sons and grandsons, and introduced them among the tribes that submitted to their sway.

Let it be remembered that the Quichua was not the mother-tongue of the Incas, who in court spoke a language unknown to the common people. They, for political motives, and particularly to destory the feuds that existed between the inhabitants of the different provinces of their vast dominions, ordered the Quichua to be taught to and learned by everybody, and to be regarded as the tongue of *Ttahuantinsuyu*. Their subjects, from however distant parts of the empire could then also understand each other, and came with time to consider themselves as members of the same family.

I have bestowed some attention upon the study of the Quichua. Not being acquainted with the dialects of the Aryan nations previous to their separation, I would not pretend to impugn the grand discovery of Mr. Lopez. But I can positively assert that expressions are not wanting in the Peruvian tongue that bear as strong a family resemblance to the dialects spoken in the Sandwich Islands and Tahiti, where I resided a few months, as the ruins of Tiahuanaco to those of Easter Island, that are composed of stones not to be found today in that place. When I visited it I was struck with the perfect similitude of the structures found there and the colossal statues, which forcibly recalled to my mind those said by Pinelo to have existed in Tiahuanaco even at the time of the Spanish conquest. This similarity in the buildings and language of the people separated by such obstacles as the deep water of the Pacific, hundreds of miles apart, cannot be attributed to a mere casual coincidence. To my mind it plainly shows that communications at some epoch or other have existed between these countries. On this particular point I have a theory of my own, which I think I can sustain by plausible facts, not speculative; but this is not the place to indulge in theories. I will, therefore, refrain from intruding mine on your readers. On the other hand, they are welcome to see it in the discourse I have pronounced before the American Geographical Society of New York in January, 1873, which has been published in the New York Tribune, lecture sheet No. 8.

The Quichua contains also many words that seem closely allied to the dialects spoken by the nations inhabiting the regions called today Central America and the Maya tongue. It would not be surprising that some colony emigrating from these countries should have reached the beautiful valley of Cuzco, and established themselves in it, in times so remote that we have no tradition even of the event. It is well known that the Quichua, was the language of the inhabitants of the valley if Cuzco exclusively before it became generalized in *Ttahuantinsuyu*, and it is today the place where it is spoken with more perfection and purity.

In answer to the question, if man came from the older (?) world of Asia,—and if so how, there are several points to consider, and not the least important relates to the relative antiquity of the continents. You are well aware that geologists, naturalists and other scientists are not wanting who, with the late Professor Agassiz, sustain that this western continent is as old, if not older, than Asia and Europe, or Africa. Leaving this question to be settled by him who may accomplish it, I will repeat here what I have sustained long ago: that the American races are autochthonous, and have had many thousand years ago relations with the inhabitants of the other parts of the earth just as we have them today. This fact I can prove by the mural paintings and basreliefs, and more than all by the portraits of men with long beards that are to be seen in Chichen Itza, not to speak of the Maya tongue, which contains expressions from nearly every language spoken in olden times (to this point I will recur hereafter), and also by the small statues of tumbaya (a mixture of silver and copper) found in the huacas of Chimu, near Trujillo on the Peruvian coast, and by those of the valley of Chincha.

These statues, which seem to belong to a very ancient date, generally represent a man seated cross-legged on the back of a turtle. The head is shaved, except the top, where the hair is left to grow, and is plaited Chinese fashion. Not unfrequently the arms are extended, the hands rest upon pillars inscribed with characters much resembling Chinese. I have had one of these curious objects long in my possession. Notwithstanding being much worn by time and the salts contained in the earth, it was one of the most perfect I have seen. It was found in the valley of Chincha. I showed it one day to a learned Chinaman, and was quite amused in watching his face while he examined the image. His features betrayed so vividly the different emotions that preyed upon his mind,—curiosity, surprise, awe, superstitious fear. I asked him if he understood the characters engraved on the pillars? "Yes," said he, "these are the ancient letters used in China before the invention of those in usage today. That"—pointing to the image he had replaced, with signs of respect and veneration, on the table—"is very old; very great thing,—only very wise men and saints are allowed to touch it." After much ado and coaxing, he at last told me, in a voice as full of reverence as a Brahmin would in uttering the sacred word O-A-UM, that the meaning of the inscription was *Fo*.

Some families of Indians, that live in the remote *bolsones* (small valleys of the Andes), sport even today a cue as the inhabitants of the Celestial empire, and the people in Eten, a small village near Piura, speak a language unknown to their neighbors, and are said to easily hold converse with the coolies of the vicinage. When and how did this intercourse exist, is rather difficult to answer. I am even timorous to insinuate it, lest the believers in the chronology of the Bible, who make the world a little more than 5800 years old, should come down upon me, and, after pouring upon my humble self their most damning anathemas, consign me, at the dictates of their sectarian charity, to that place over the door of which Dante read,—

Perme si vá tra la perduta gente.

. . . . . .

Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch' entrate.

And yet mine is not the fault if reason tells me that the climate of Tiahuanaco, situated near the shores of the lake of Titicaca, 13,500 feet above the sea, must not have always been what it is now, otherwise the ground around it, and for many miles barren, would not have been able to support the population of a large city. Today it produces merely a few *ocas* (a kind of small potato that is preserved frozen), and yields scanty crops of maize and beans. Tiahuanaco *may*, at some distant period, have enjoyed the privilege of being a seaport. Nothing opposes this supposition. On one hand, it is a well-known fact that, owing to the conical motion of the earth, the waters retreat continually from the western coasts of America, which rise at a certain known ratio every century. On the other hand, the bank of oysters and other marine shells and debris, found on the slopes of the Andes to near their summits, obviously indicate that at some time or other the sea has covered them.

When was that? I will leave to sectarians to compute, lest the reckoning should carry us back to that time when the space between Tiahuanaco and Easter Island was dry land, and the valleys and plains now lying under the waters of the Pacific swarmed with industrious, intelligent human beings, were strewn with cities and villas, yielded luxuriant crops to the inhabitants, and the figure should show that people lived there before the creation of the world. I recoil with horror at the mere idea of being even suspected of insinuating such an heretical doctrine.

But if the builders of the strange structures on Easter Island have had, then, communications with the rearers of Tiahuanaco by *land*, then we may easily account for the many coincidences which exist between the laws, religious rites, sciences,—astronomical and others,—customs, monuments, languages, and even dresses, of the inhabitants of this Western continent, and those of Asia and Africa. Hence the similarity of many Asiatic and American notions. Hence, also, the generalized idea of a deluge among men, whose traditions remount to the time when the waters that covered the plains of America, Europe, Africa and Asia left their beds, invaded the portions of the globe they now occupy, and destroyed their inhabitants.

Since that time, when, of course, all communications were cut between the few individuals that escaped the cataclysm by taking refuge on the highlands, their intercourse has been renewed at different and very remote epochs—a fact that I can easily prove.

But, why should we lose ourselves in the mazes of supposition, where we run a fair chance of wandering astray, when we may recur to the monuments of Yucatan? These are unimpeachable witnesses that the Peninsula was inhabited by civilized people many thousand years ago, even before the time ascribed by the Mosaic records to the creation.

Among the ruins of Aké, a city unique in Yucatan for its strange architecture, evidently built by giants, whose bones are now and then disinterred, a city that was inhabited at the time of the conquest, and where the Spaniards retreated for safety after the defeat they suffered at the hands of the dwellers of the country near the ruins of Chichen-Itza, is to be seen an immense building composed of three superposed platforms. The upper one forms a terrace supporting three rows of twelve columns. Each column is composed of eight large square stones, piled one upon the other, without cement, to a height of four metres, and indicate a lapse of 160 years in the life of the nation. These stones are, or were, called *Katun*. Every twenty years, amid the rejoicings of the people, another stone was added to those already piled up, and a new era or epoch was recorded in the history and life of the people. After seven of these stones had thus been placed—that is to say, after a lapse of 140 years—they began the *Ahau-Katun*, or King Katun, when a small stone was added every four years on one of the corners of the uppermost, and at the end of the twenty years of the *Ahau-Katun*, with great ceremonies and feasting, the crowning stone was placed upon the supporting small ones. (The photographs of this monument can be seen at the house of Mr. H. Dixon.) Now, as I have said, we have thirty-six columns composed of eight stones, each representing a period of twenty years, which would give us a total of 5760 years since the first Katun was placed on the terrace to the time when the city was abandoned, shortly after the Spanish conquest.

On the northeast of the great pyramid at Chichen-Itza, at a short distance from this monument, can be seen the graduated pyramid that once upon a time supported the main temple of the city dedicated to *Kukulcan* (the winged serpent), the protecting divinity of the place. On three sides the structure is surrounded by a massive wall about five metres high and eight wide on the top. On that wall are to be seen the columns of the Katuns. The rank vegetation has invaded every part of the building, and thrown many of the columns to the ground. I began to clear the trees from the pyramid, but was unable to finish work because of the disarming of my workmen, owing to a revolution that a certain Teodosio Canto had initiated against the government of

Yuca'an. I counted as many as one hundred and twenty columns, but got tired of pushing my way through the nearly impenetrable thicket, where I could see many more among the shrubs.

Those I counted would give an aggregate of 19,200 years,—quite a respectable old age, even for the life of a nation. This is plainly corroborated by the other means of reckoning the antiquity of the monuments,—such as the wear of the stones by meteorological influences, or the thickness of the stratum of the rich loam, the result of the decay of vegetable life, accumulated on the roofs and terraces of the buildings, not to speak of their position respecting the pole-star and the declination of the magnetic needle.

The architecture of the Mayas is unlike that of any other people of what is called the Old World. It resembles only itself. And, notwithstanding that Mayapan, from the most remote times, was visited by travellers from Asia and Africa, by the wise and learned men who came from abroad to consult the *H-Menes;* notwithstanding, also, the invasion of the Nahuas and the visitation of the pilgrims, the Maya art of building remained peculiar and unchanged, and their language was adopted by their conquerors. The Nahuas, after destroying the city of the wise men, established themselves in Uxmal, on account of its strategic position, in the midst of a plain inclosed by hills easily defended. To embellish that city, where dwelt the foes of Chichen, they copied the complex ornamentation of the most ancient building of that metropolis,—the palace and museum,—disdaining the chastity, the simplicity, the beautiful and tasteful elegance of the monuments of the latter period. These, of graceful and airy proportions, are utterly devoid of the profusion and complexity of ornamentation and design that overload the palaces and temples of Uxmal. When gazing on the structures of that city, and comparing them with those of Chichen, it seemed that I was contemplating a low-born, illiterate man, on whom Fortune, in one of her strange freaks, has smiled, and who imagines that by bedecking himself with gaudy habiliments and shining jewelry he acquires knowledge and importance. All in Uxmal proclaims the decadency of art, the relaxation of morals, the depravity of customs, the lewdness of the inhabitants. In Chichen they represent the life-giving power of the universe under the emblems of the Sun and Kukulcan. In Uxmal they worshipped the phallus, which is to be seen everywhere, in the courts, in the ornaments of the temples, in the residences of the priests and priestesses, in all the monuments except the house of the governor, built by Aac, the younger brother and assassin of Chac-Mool.

The edifices of Uxmal are evidently constructed with less art and knowledge than those of Chichen. The latter remain whole and nearly intact, except in those places where the hand of man has been busy; the former have suffered much from the inclemencies of the atmosphere, and from the ignorance and vandalistic propensities of the visitors. I have been present at the destruction of magnificent walls where the ruins stand. Some prefer to destroy these relics of past ages, rather than to pick up with more ease the stones that strew the soil in every direction.

The ornaments of temples and palaces are mostly composed of hieroglyphics, highly adorned, of the emblems of religious rites, of statues of great men and priests, surrounded by many embellishments. In Uxmal the columns are representations of the phallus-worship of the Nahuas. In Chichen the base is formed by the head of Kukulcan, the shaft by the body of the serpent, with its feathers beautifully carved to the very chapter. On the chapters of the columns that support the portico, at the entrance of the castle in Chichen-Itza, may be seen the carved figures of long-bearded men, with upraised hands, in the act of worshipping sacred trees. They forcibly recall to the mind the same worship in Assyria, as seen on the slabs found by Layard in the ruins of Nineveh, now in the Assyrian gallery of the British Museum. No one can form an exact idea of the monuments of Mayapan by reading mere descriptions. It is necessary to either examine the buildings themselves (and this is not quite devoid of danger, since the most interesting are

situated in territories forbidden to white men, and occupied by the hostile Indians of Chan-Santa-Cruz, who since 1849 wage war to the knife on the inhabitants of Yucatan, and have devastated the greatest part of that State), or to study my magnificent collection of photographs where they are most faithfully portrayed; that can be done with more ease, without running the risk of losing one's life.

It is said that the deciphering of the American hieroglyphics is a rather desperate enterprise, because we have no Rosetta stone with a bilingual inscription. I humbly beg to differ from that opinion; at least as regards the inscriptions on the walls of the monuments of Mayapan. In the first instance, the same language, with but few alterations, that was used by the builders of these edifices is today commonly spoken by the inhabitants of Yucatan and Peten, and we have books, grammars and dictionaries compiled by the Franciscan friars in the first years of the conquest, translated in Spanish, French and English. We do not, therefore, require an American Rosetta stone to be discovered. Secondly, if it is undeniable that Bishop Landa consigned to the flames all the books of the Mayas that happened to fall into his hands, it is also true that by a singular freak he preserved us, in great part at least, the Maya alphabet in his work, "Las Cosas de Yucatan," discovered by Brasseur de Bourbourg in the national library of Madrid. The Americanists owe much to the researches of the abbé. I consider his works as deserving a better reception than they have ever had from the scientific world at large. It is true that he is no respecter of Mosaic chronology,—and who can be in presence of the monuments of Central America? Reason commands, and we must submit to evidence and truth! I have carefully compared the characters of said manuscript with those engraved upon the stones in Chichen, which I photographed, and found them alike. Some on the frontispieces of the palaces and temples differ, it is true, but do not our ornamented capital letters from the small? Their deciphering may give a little more trouble.

The Mayas, besides using their alphabet, employed at the same time a kind of pictorial writing, something not unlike our *rebus*. They also would record domestic and public life-customs, religious worship and ceremonies, funeral rites, court receptions, battles, etc., etc., just as we do in our paintings and engravings, portraying them with superior art and perfect knowledge of drawing and colors, which also had their accepted and acknowledged meaning. These we have already partly deciphered, and now understand.

I have said it was my firm conviction that among the inhabitants of Peten—nay, perchance, also, of Chan-Santa-Cruz—some one may be found who is still possessed of the knowledge of reading the ancient *Pic-huun*. But the Indians are anything but communicative, and they are at all times unwilling to reveal to the white men whatever may have been imparted to them by their fathers. To keep these things a secret they consider a sacred duty. They even refuse to make known the medicinal properties of certain plants, while they are willing, provided they feel a liking for you, or are asked by a person whom they respect or love, to apply these plants, prepared by them, to heal the bite of a rattlesnake, tarantula, or any of the many venomous animals that abound in their forests.

During the many years that I have been among the Indians of all parts of America,—now with the civilized, now amidst those that inhabit the woods far away from the commerce of people.—strange to say, reciprocal sympathy and good feeling have always existed between us; they have invariably ceased to consider me a stranger. This singular attractive feeling has often caused them to open their hearts; and to it I owe the knowledge of many curious facts and traditions that otherwise I should never have known. This unknown power did not fail me in Espita, a pretty little town in the eastern part of Yucatan, where I received from a very old Indian not only the intelligence that forty years ago men still existed who could read the ancient Maya writing, but also a clue to decipher the inscriptions on the buildings.

Conversing with some friends in Espita about the ancient remains to be found in that vicinity, they

offered to show me one of the most interesting relics of olden times. A few days later they ushered into my presence a venerable old Indian. His hairs were gray, his eyes blue with age. The late curate of the place, Senor Dominguez, who departed this life at the respectable age of ninety, was wont to say that he had, since a child, and as long as he could remember, always known Mariano Chablé, the same old man. They give him 150 years at least; yet he enjoys perfect health; still works at his trade (he is a potter); is in perfect possession of his mental faculties, and of an unerring memory. Having lost his wife, of about the same age as himself, but a short time before my interview with him, he complained of feeling lonely, and thought that as soon as the year of mourning was over he would take another wife to himself. It was a Sunday morning that we met for the first time. He had been to church, assisted at mass. There the recollection of his departed life-companion had assailed him and filled his old heart with sadness,—and he had called to his relief another acquaintance—rum—to help him to dispel his sorrow. Sundry draughts had made him quite talkative. He was in the right condition to open his bosom to a sympathizing friend,—so I was to him already. The libation I offered with him to the *manes* of his regretted mate unsealed his lips. After a few desultory questions, with the object of testing his memory and intelligence, with great caution I began to inquire about the points I had more at heart—to wit, to gather all possible information and traditions upon the ruins of Chichen-Itza I was about to visit. The old man spoke only Maya; and my friend Cipriano Rivas, well versed in that language, was my interpreter, not being myself sufficiently proficient in it to hold a long conversation.

"Father," said I, "have you ever been in Chichen? Do you know anything about the big houses that are said to exist there?"

"I have never been in Chichen, and of my own knowledge know nothing of those big houses; but remember what the old men used to say about them when I was young."

"And what was that, pray. Will you tell me?"

"Oh yes! I had a friend in *Saci* (Valladolid today),—he died forty years ago or so,—a very, very old man. His name was Manuel Alayon. He used to tell us all about these enchanted houses. He had a book that none but he could read, which contained many things about them. We used to gather at his house at night to listen to the reading of that book."

"Where is the book now, father?"

"Don't know. Alayon died. No one ever knew what became of the sacred book. Afterwards came the insurrection of the Indians, and the old friends also died."

"Do you rember what the book said?"

"Now, one of the things comes to my mind. It said that there was a very old house called the *Akab-sib*, and in that house a writing, which recited that *a day would come when the inhabitants of Saci would converse with those of Ho [Merida] by means of a cord, that would be stretched by people not belonging to the country.*"

When I heard this, the idea occurred to me that the old fellow was quietly having his little bit of fun at my expense. In order to be sure of it I inquired:—

"What do you say, father? How can that be? Do you imagine how people forty leagues apart can converse by means of a cord?"

But when my interlocutor answered that he could not either know or imagine how that could be done, and particularly when my friends assured me that Chablé had no idea of the electric telegraph, I then became convinced of his good faith, and began to ponder on the strange disclosure we had just listened to. The old man soon rose to take his departure, and I invited him to call again, when he had not been to church and consoled himself with his spiritual friend, in order that I might be able to take his portrait. He repeated his visit a few days later, as requested. I took his portrait, and asked him again about the monuments of Chichen. But, alas! that day his lips were sealed, or his memory failed, or his Indian secrecy had returned. He knew nothing of them; had never been there; did not remember what the old men said of the enchanted houses when he was young,

except that the place had been enchanted for many, many years, and that it was not good to sleep near them, because the *Xlab-pak-yum*, the lord of the old walls, would be angry at the intrusion, and chastise the offender by disease and death within the year.

Some months later I arrived at Chichen. The revelation of the old man recurred vividly to my mind. I immediately went in quest of the building he had mentioned—the *Akab-sib*. [This name literally means—*Akab*, dark, mysterious; *sib*, to write. But we believe that anciently it was called *Alcab-sib;* that is, *Alcab*, to run in a hurry; *sib*, to write.] We had some trouble in finding it, concealed and confounded as it was among the tall trees of the forest, its roof supporting a dense thicket. We visited its eighteen rooms in search of the precious inscription, and at length discovered it on the lintel of an inner doorway in the room situated at the south end of the edifice. The dust of ages was thick upon it, and so concealed the characters as to make them well-nigh invisible. With care I washed the slab, then with black crayon darkened its surface until the intaglio letters appeared in white on a dark background. (The photographs of this inscription can be seen at Mr. H. Dixon's.)

While thus employed Mrs. Le Plongeon stood by my side, studying the characters as they gradually appeared more and more distinct. To our astonishment we soon discovered the cord mentioned by Chablé. It started from the mouth of a face (which represents the people of Saci), situated near the right-hand upper corner of the slab, then runs through its whole length in a slanting direction and terminates at the ear of another head (the inhabitants of Ho). The inclined direction of the cord or line indicates the topographical position of the respective cities—Saci (Valladolid)—being more elevated above the level of the sea than Ho (Merida). But imagine now our amazement at noticing the strange fact that the mode of communication that Chablé ignored was ....by means of electric currents! Yes, of electricity! This fact is plainly indicated by the four zigzag lines, representing the lightning, coming from the four cardinal points and converging toward a centre near the upper or starting station, and also by the solitary zigzag seen about the middle of the cord—following its direction—indicating a half-way station. Then the electric telegraph, that we consider *the discovery par excellence* of the nineteenth century, was known of the ancient Itza sages 5000 or 10,000 years ago. Ah, *Nihil novum sub solem!* And in that slab we have a clue to the deciphering of the Maya inscriptions,—an American Rosetta stone.

I will now say a few words of that language that has survived unaltered through the vicissitudes of the nations that spoke it thousands of years ago, and is yet the general tongue in Yucatan—the Maya. There can be no doubt that this is one of the most ancient languages on earth. It was used by a people that lived at least 6000 years ago, as proved by the Katuns, to record the history of their rulers, the dogmas of their religion, on the walls of their palaces, on the façades of their temples.

In a lecture delivered last year before the American Geographical Society of New York, Dr. C. H. Berendt has shown that the Maya was spoken, with its different dialects, by the inhabitants of Mayapan and Xibalba and the other nations of Central America south of Anahuac. He ought to be a good authority on the subject, having dedicated some years in Yucatan to its study.

The Maya, containing words from almost every language, ancient or modern, is well worth the attention of philologists. And since, as Professor Max Muller said, philology is the shining light that is to illuminate the darkness of ethnology, besides the portraits of the bearded men discovered by me in Chichen, those of the princes and priests, and the beautiful statue of Chac-Mool, which serve to determine the different types, may be a guide to discover whence man and civilization came to America, if the American races can be proved not to be autochthonous. Notwithstanding a few guttural sounds, the Maya is soft, pliant, rich in diction and expression; even every shade of thought may be expressed.

. . . . . .

Whence, then, are the Maya language and the Mayas? I should like to learn from the Americanists who are soon to congregate in Luxembourg.

AUGUSTUS LE PLONGEON, M.D.

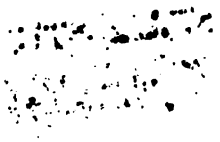
NOTE. The omission (as indicated) at the close of Dr. Le Plongeon's letter is a repetition of what he has previously stated in other communications, in regard to the many foreign words found in the Maya language, and that the Greek is there largely represented. Then the question arises, who brought this language to Mayapan? He continues: "The customs, religion, architecture of this country, have nothing in common with those of Greece. Who carried the Maya to the country of Helen? Was it the Caras or Carians, who have left traces of their existence in many countries of America? They are the most ancient navigators known. They roved the seas long before the Phœnicians. They landed on the North-East coasts of Africa, thence they entered the Mediterranean, where they became dreaded as pirates, and afterwards established themselves on the shores of Asia Minor. Whence came they? What was their origin? Nobody knows. They spoke a language unknown to the Greeks, who laughed at the way they pronounced their own idiom. Were they emigrants from this Western continent? Was not the tunic of white linen, *that required no fastening*, used by the Ionian women, according to Herodotus, the same as the *uipil* of the Maya females of to-day even, introduced by them among the inhabitants of some of the Mediterranean isles?"

The latest information about the statue exhumed at Chichen Itza must be discouraging to those solicitous for the careful conservation of this work of art. *La Revista de Mérida* of May 31, 1877, has this quotation from a Mexican newspaper:—

"A SHAMEFUL FACT."

"LA PATRIA *has the following paragraph copied from the* EPOCA, *which ought to attract the attention of all interested.* '*The notable statue of Chac-Mool, which was received in the capital of Yucatan with so great demonstrations of jubilee, and with unaccustomed pomp, has remained in our city since its arrival, some days ago, abandoned in a small square, afar off and dirty, where the small boys of the neighborhood amuse themselves by pelting it. If Sr. Dn. Augustin del Rio had known the little value that would have been placed upon his gift, it is certain that he would have guarded there* [at Yucatan] *his king and his records, about which no one here concerns himself.*'"

How much of the above unfavorable criticism on the neglect of this archæological treasure by the central government, is due to the political bias of the source of this information, cannot be determined. We can, however, protest against any want of appreciation of a monument of past history in this manner lost to the State of Yucatan and to the discoverer, Dr. Le Plongeon, by the arbitrary exercise of official authority.



THE BORROWER WILL BE CHARGED AN OVERDUE FEE IF THIS BOOK IS NOT RETURNED TO THE LIBRARY ON OR BEFORE THE LAST DATE STAMPED BELOW. NON-RECEIPT OF OVERDUE NOTICES DOES NOT EXEMPT THE BORROWER FROM OVERDUE FEES.

CANCELLED
DEC 0 1986
DEC 1 - 1986
208943